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A VISION FROM  
THE WILD

J. W. Webster



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# A VISION FROM THE WILD

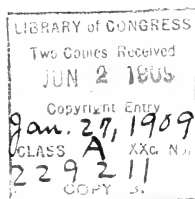
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# A VISION FROM THE WILD

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## PRELUDE.

No man may pen the beauties of a sunset on the plains,  
Nor artist paint its splendor, all efforts are in vain;  
It sinks to rest, beyond the hills, a burnished ball of gold,  
Leaving a beauteous trail of glory, twilight o'er the wold.

The sun-gleamed clouds' reflected glow mellows the distant lea,  
Behold a strange transfiguration, a green and waving sea,  
Ten thousand gold-tipped arrows, flung from the setting sun,  
Dance and quiver in gorgeous glory, on the western horizon.

The fleecy clouds are mustered near the day god's failing light,  
And the stars in timid grandeur steal out from silent night,  
Now the penciled rays of glory are furled slowly in the west,  
Black night reigns victorious, the sun hath sunk to rest.

## CAMP.

Alone in the western wilderness I cast my lonesome camp,  
Near a mountain's base, where snow-brewed waters joyous sing,  
As they leap and sparkle, cold from their distant source;  
Soft breezes fan my cheek, fragrant freighted, strangely sweet,  
From the wild flowers' bloom, singing through the pine boughs,  
Sighing in the chaparral, whistling down the canyon's gloom,  
Then plainwise pass, in boisterous ecstasy; great mountains  
In gloomy grandeur rise, like giant sentinels placed to guard  
The flight of day; the moon full-faced hung low in the west,  
Casting her mellow light o'er the slow, tired, retiring world,  
The glowing horizon sheds its rosy hue, settles dim and grey.

Soft reclining on mother earth, in silent meditation sunk,  
I watched the glittering lamps of night, silent, one by one,  
Take station in the sky; twilight shed her flimsy veil, fled,  
As if frightened by approaching night, darkness ruled the wold;  
The wild denizens of the hills awoke, each by instinct taught,  
Welcomed night in boisterous revelry; the eagle from his perch  
In wild exultation greets the stars; the great-eyed moody owl  
In derisive cadence hoots delight; the sad-voiced whippoorwill  
Calls in wailing pathos from the grove; the panther's scream  
Reverberates from peak to peak, in echoes chilling and wild;  
The dismal howl, by the great wolf mouthed, trembles the air,  
In cadence weird and fierce; the timid deer starts with fear,  
Flies plainwise in fright; 'tis night upon the western plain.

Far out anear the horizon a black storm cloud from plain arose,  
Like a dense fog from placid sea, nearer its darkness sweeps,  
Enshrouding the earth in dismal gloom, as a funeral pall it blacked  
The frightened world, and rolls the trembling starlight far aback;  
The timid stars grew bold, and hurled their raylets hard against  
The gloomy wall; bravely the twinkling light-beams smote the cloud,  
Boldly they lanced the deadly black, until worn, weary and faint,  
They reluctant fled, to sheltering dome above, repulsed, driven  
Skyward by the breaking storm. Crashing thunder breaks the still,  
And fierce lightning leaps across the wild clouds' gloomy front,  
In blazing, lurid splendor, glorious as falling meteor's trail;  
The thunder hurls blasting bolts, 'gainst giant mountain's sides,  
As if in fury 'twould rend their moorings old; roaring winds  
Sweep wild and boisterous from the plain, a howling hurricane.  
The startled pine trees bend and sway, lashed by the roaring winds;  
Trembling, in frightful agony, with dying stubbornness they brave  
The storm's mad charge, until, torn and twisted, they dismantled fall;  
The wild storm passes on, trailing darkness in its deadly wake.

The flickering fire paints weird frightful forms, murdering sleep  
And calling superstition's aid, to people night with haunting fear,  
Monsters of foul frightful mien strode 'cross the chilling gloom,  
Horrid, bold and fierce, as if straying worldwide from burning hell.  
Great shaggy beasts leaped from the night, with glaring horrid eyes,  
And uncouth forms, blood-grimed and slimy, they leered and blinked,  
Then, snarling, vanished into yawning black. The night owls silent flit,  
And swerve in ghostly undulations around my lone, lonesome bed,

Like spirits, by conscience stung, doing penance in dark gloomy night.  
The great king-wolf mouthed his clannish call, in startling proximity,  
Coyotes gambol, snarl and vicious snap round my bed in hellish glee;  
Soul-chilling noises fill the air, with gibberings and muttering low,  
Whispers from out the gloom pause the heart with trembling fear;  
Thus the dismal night grew old, with gruesome, startling revelry.

From out the black bowels of the night a soft and wavering sound,  
Low-pitched, but gaining tone, smote my 'wildered ear, strangely sweet,  
Soft as mother's crooning songs of lullaby, clear as morning bells,  
The intonations rose and fell upon that midnight storm-black air,  
With bated breath I strained to hear that strange faint melody;  
Distinctly stealing through the night, I heard this sweet old song:

On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,  
And cast a wistful eye  
To Canaan's fair and happy land,  
Where my possessions lie.  
All o'er these wide extended plains  
Shines one eternal day;  
There God the Son forever reigns,  
And scatters night away.  
No chilling winds, or poisoned breath,  
Can reach that healthful shore;  
Sickness, sorrow, pain or death  
Are felt or feared no more.

The old song floating through the gloom waked echoes of long ago,  
From far-away deserted home; my lone camp fled from vision's view,  
And space stood peopled with faces long unseen; the sighing winds  
Passed, freighted with melodies, long weary years unheard; to my eye,  
The rugged mountains melt away, wide pleasing valleys quiet spread,  
In wondrous undulation. In this dreamy happy scene I silent stood,  
In speechless admiration of this glorious homelike land, at this  
Strange transfiguration, wrought by the old sweet-sounding song.  
The swaying forests fade away, and lo, wide fields of yellow grain  
Waving in the summer's ripening sun, stand a glorious rich reward,  
For the reaper's brawny arm; I saw the keen scythe deftly swung,  
Falling the yielding grain; I heard happy children joyous sing,  
As they gamboled in the blushing straw. The spreading plain vanished,  
A happy plowboy I stood at home, my long deserted home again.

The camp-fire's fitful glow soon paled away and died; behold, instead,  
A farmhouse stood, low and quaintly eaved, full mirrored on my view,  
Beautifully reflected to my eye, the familiar outlines, unchanged;  
My boyhood home in startling boldness stands, grand home of my  
childhood,

The one fair spot on earth that troubles my lonely nightly dreams.  
Home, the sweetest word e'er spoke, or penned, to a lone wanderer's  
mind;

Silent it stands, a landmark of my former better life, a haven of rest,  
That ever beckons my return. There, in innocence, I, the outlaw chief,  
In reverence bowed at mother's knee, and breathed a prayer as pure  
As ever sought heaven's blessed throne. Now, alas, 'tis but in dreams  
I ever think of prayer; my better life is gone, is dead, only as memory  
It faintly lives, or, as forbidden ghost, it haunts my waking hours.

Again a careless lad I stand beneath the old tree, where shadows fall,  
Somber, dark and cool, inviting meditations and dreams; I hear again,  
Soft floating on the evening breeze, songs of peace and holy praise,  
Like benedictions angel born, sent from above to soothe my lonely  
sleep;

In soft-toned image I see my dear old mother waiting, silent and sad,  
Still smiling a gladsome welcome for her wayward, wandering son;  
The old home stands as it stood of yore, a picture beautiful to me;  
Sweet are the Christian's dreams of heaven, but a dream, sweeter by  
far,

Is the worldly wanderer's dream of his deserted boyhood happy home.

There is a boderland, lying 'twixt silent revery and dreams,  
Dim the tracing, these bordering lands meet and merge to one,  
Weird, silent land, at the crossing none may idly pause to note  
The shadowy trace, dividing our waking reveries from dreams;  
Did I pass 'cross this mystic, shadowy line, I may not now discuss;  
The old song whose soft sweet melody, so pure, so homelike, rung,  
Like low-toned music heard from afar, held me to silence bound,  
Enchanting visions of wondrous beauty disturbed my memory,  
Waking a thousand pleasing thoughts of childhood's happy days,  
Yet pictured well in memory's retentive vaults; childish scenes,  
Long forgotten, passed in vivid panorama before my mental view;  
The present fled the scene, I lived again in distant, happy past.

Another change, a shadowy figure, upright and silent, stood,  
Faint silhouetted 'gainst the distant, dark, receding cloud;

Brighter the outlines grew, till, well-defined, there stood  
A being radiant, full-figured, before my startled gaze;  
From whence he came, to me may never stand full revealed;  
There in glowing outline he stood, plain to my bewildered view,  
In statue like to mortal, yet far grander and nobler to behold,  
Shapely and well poised his stately head, his nether limbs,  
Like chiseled marble shaped, his face in splendor brightly shone,  
Bright as sunshine, unobscured by summer's fleecy, snow-capped cloud.  
Clothed in garments fine, aye, superfine, unearthly splendor,  
Drew well the line, demarking him from earth and mortal mold;  
Around his lofty brow there shone a brilliant, radiant light,  
That dimmed the eye of him who did long and steadfast gaze;  
Benevolent he looked, yet firm, as one whose every spoken word  
Bore stern and just command. In modulated tones he softly spoke.

Mortal, the old song's familiar notes have with sadness touched  
Responsive chords and awoke to life reflections long at rest,  
Deep in memory's chambered vaults; awoke reflections ye fain  
Would strangle, or cast forever hence, to black oblivion's realm;  
To-night your past life frowns like a deadly incubus; it stands  
Bright mirrored on your mental view; your record, faulty made,  
Passes in startling panorama athwart your rebellious mind;  
The godly lessons by mother taught, but now, alas, forgotten all,  
This night, in ghostly resurrection haunt your troubled heart;  
Life's brightest jewels cluster around a perfect, happy home;  
A conscience hardened may loose its sting for godless crimes,  
But ever remembers the early childhood home. Your better life  
To-night starts from a misty past, when you in innocence knelt  
Down by a pure, sweet mother's knee, and breathed to holy God  
A prayer as pure as ever quitted earth; thy love, O desperate man,  
Yet chaining ye to mother's knee, and in memory binds ye to earth;  
Let that love of mother gone wake your heart to better life.

Listen: there is a path, well cleared for straying human feet,  
When firmly trod, leads to a better, brighter, happier life,  
Where conscience is robbed of every sting—a realm of peace.  
There is a hope, firm rooted in every human heart and mind,  
Of life beyond this world's brief span; even ye have at times  
Made resolution firm to lead a pure and crimeless life;  
Ye, like every mortal, holds, deep hidden in your inmost heart,  
A hope that beyond the gloomy grave ye'll find a home of rest;

Since the angel from heaven rolled back the great stone  
That held the glorious Prince of Peace a time entombed,  
Mankind have dreamed of joys beyond this fateful world, a hope  
To dwell in the new Jerusalem, as viewed by holy, inspired John;  
And described in glowing ecstasy, that wondrous vision waked  
A hope that none may doubt of a life of bliss and eternal rest.  
When the sacred cross was reared on Calvary's rugged breast,  
The world stood well illumed by faith, a holy heaven gained.

Religion, as taught by creeds, ne'er appealed to you; your life,  
Spent 'midst nature's wilds, lent small time to study creeds;  
War's crimsoned history filled your soul with burning ecstasy,  
Warped your nobler, better life with deeds of blood and strife;  
By nature ye stand bold and fearless, ye boldly dare hereafter  
Yon passing storm, with all its frightful destruction, disturbed  
Ye not, or caused one trembling fear to faint your rugged soul;  
To ye those destructive winds were but seeking vacuum farther south;  
Ye saw no wrath of God displayed, ye wot not of His mighty power,  
Ye believe effect follows cause. Were ye not in childhood taught  
That Almighty God holds this world as child holds glittering toy;  
That the destructive thunder hurls its bolts at His command;  
That cyclones sweep the shrinking world, obedient to His will;  
That earthquakes rend defenseless earth to aggrandize His name;  
That war, famine and remorseless death are by His voice proclaimed  
To scourge His own created land, that sinful man may know His love?

Thus teaches man's theology; ye hold not to this man-made faith;  
Ye see in nature's creative God wisdom, power and parental love,  
A ruler wondrous wise, whose laws immutable, not sudden changed  
Nor warped to suit human vagaries, that ascend as pious prayers.  
Special providences, that suit or save mankind, ye full ignore;  
Under an unbending law ye all are born, so must ye ever live;  
Effect will certain follow cause; the earth, the solar worlds,  
Are bound by God's laws, older than the first nebule that sprung,  
Sparkling, from chaos' gloomy womb; and must unbroken stand until  
Time shall cease to be. This your firm belief; with you I hold  
No wordy argument; as ye sow so shall ye certain reap; this truth  
I will affirm, in earthy life, stands well avouched; of eternity  
I may not now hold converse; my mission to earth I now unfold;  
Heaven, as planned by aged John, ye may with mortal vision scan,  
Yet well fill your allotted span; listen, 'tis by Heaven decreed

To ye this commission be given, ere death shall call ye hence,  
Free passage to, and through, the Christian's eternal home above.

The golden gates will swing ajar, and stand a time full open wide,  
To grant ye passage-way, safe convoy I avouch, and speedy flight,  
To realms ye little reck; I hold a pass that swings the gate  
To that glorious world, the home of saints redeemed; ye, O man,  
May walk the streets of the new Jerusalem, stand full-sighted  
On the river's brink, lave in its limpid floods; the tree of life  
Spreads its foliage rare; its fruits are stern forbid, no hand  
May pluck from bough, or taste its luscious sweet. The saints redeemed  
Will welcome you with music sweet, unearthly grand; wondrous light,  
From the great white throne, will guide your mortal feet; harps,  
By angels tuned, fill heaven with holy harmony. Now, O mortal man,  
My mission's plain worded to thine ear; plume ye for ready flight.

O thou glorious one from realms of endless day, pass me, I pray;  
Seek one whose soul stands clean and pure, washed in the blood  
Of holy Christ; fear trembles my heart, palsy shakes my form,  
Fear ever stood stranger to my soul, now I feel its fateful grip,  
And tremble before thy august front; God ne'er created living thing  
That shook my mortal frame with dastard fear, now I quake in dread,  
And shake with a tremor I cannot down. Listen: beyond this world  
I hold no heritage, no title-sheet to realms of eternal light; I  
Fear me much my trespassing on holy ground might great disturb  
The saintly band that peoples heaven; my sin-grimed, earthy soul  
Would discord plant in heaven's blissful harmony, and seed eternity  
With sorrow, pain and foul dismay; know ye, O holy one, my knee  
Stands stranger to Christian's kneeling attitude; in life I never  
Bent a cringing knee to God or man in supplication or in coward fear;  
Hence my passage through the golden gate would be giant sacrilege.

Aye, mortal, had foul death released thy faulty, unclean soul,  
Curtailed thy span of earthly life, unshriven sent thee gravewise,  
Ill tutored for saintly joys, the jeweled gate would sure debar  
Thee entrance to heaven's peaceful rest; thy route would swerve  
And lead thee to realms unexplored by angel, saint or cherubim.  
Listen: thy soul, unreleased from durance here, unclaimed, stands  
Candidate for repentance and Christly love; ye, O man, may walk  
The streets of blessed paradise, unwashed in Christ's holy blood.

Time calls us to depart; at once obey.

Fear not, and grow not weary in flight;  
I, heaven-sent pilot, vouch passage-way.

Yonder brilliant star, held well in sight,  
Will swerve not greatly from compass view,  
Direct toward our goal; yet think not you  
Heaven's grandeur, reflected by its glow;  
'Tis beacon light to guide us from below.

Sudden darkness encompassed me, the bright star's guiding light  
Tunneled the gloom, and sent her penciled rays, pointing direct,  
For steerage way; naught of the commanding guide stood outlined,  
Yet his presence near I felt, and knew no coward's trembling fear.  
We passed from earth, to what compass-point holding course  
I may not rightly vouch; through resistless space we held way.  
Was I supported, I know not, nor may I ever know; this I do affirm,  
Through space I cleft no tardy way, but speeded as meteors speed,  
True as the needle points, to its mysterious attraction north,  
Straight toward that beacon light we fled; how long the upward flight  
I may not judge; my every thought was starward fixed; no doubt  
Or trembling thoughts of fear, disturbed my entranced soul;  
All mundane cares were left firm-stationed on receding earth;  
Swiftly through noiseless space we silent sped our upward way;  
Time, aye, even life, had lost all charms; my all was starward fixed.

Anon the starlight fled our course, black, gloomy darkness obscured  
Our further passage-way; black as the murky fumes of hell it stood;  
Here lingering pause occurred, as if my silent, mysterious guide,  
Like mariner with reckoning lost, needs must hold short pause  
To steer his forward course aright, and guide his way by other light;  
Now at distance great a glowing light-point seen; faintly it beams,  
Then brighter grew, till great space was filled with brilliant light;  
Brighter, lighter than noonday sun it shone. Sudden mind and vision  
Fled my mortal frame; all was blank; how long the space I answer not;  
When passed the trance, I stood, full-sighted and acutely sane, anear  
A shining gate, coped with glittering gold, in structure solid pearl,  
Swung in a wall of precious stones, that bright and dazzling shone  
In blinding splendor, emitting radiant light; great diamonds gleamed,  
Onyx, beryl, and all rare and precious gems, in strange confederation,  
Gleamed and sparkled from that wondrous, beautiful builded wall.



From within that pearly gate enchanting music swelled; no ear  
From earth was e'er atuned for melodies so grand; a thousand harps,  
By skilled hands touched, blended in harmony, celestial, sublime,  
Soft as echoes from sacred songs, it smote the listening ear; anthems,  
Chanted by saints redeemed, charged with welcome, greeted mine  
heart,

And filled my soul with holy awe. I saw the wondrous light ascend  
That holds the realm at eternal day; I heard ten thousand saints  
Shouting hozanna to the Lamb; soft-scented breezes from the stream  
In soothing caresses fan my cheek; I hear the blessed river flow,  
As its wavelets lave the golden shore; I hear the angels singing  
Gladsome songs of holy joy; I bow in admiration at my welcoming.  
My soul is hushed in silence, my heart throbs with intense joy;  
I shout in happy exultation; I stand, I stand, at heaven's gate!

Mortal, 'tis true ye stand at heaven's gate, stand well atuned  
To cross portals ne'er passed by living man; ye enter heaven  
Privileged beyond thy meed. Thus spake my whilom guide. Aye, soon  
Heaven in all its glory, as pictured by John and preaching men,  
Will ope full shone to thy living eye; this, ye will remember,  
Is a heaven builded by mortal man, I vouch not for its joys.  
Know that in this retreat all things are not revealed; even I,  
Who have roamed its streets for countless ages, have ne'er  
Beheld the Creator, the living God; He, like earthy potentates,  
Reigns clothed in mysterious power; silent and alone He sits,  
In haughty, unapproachable grandeur. Man condemned him thus to  
rule,

To stand aloof from all, save Christ and superprivileged saints.  
Heaven's great white throne, theme of Christian's song and prayer,  
Must to ye be cloaked in gloom; no human eye could well endure  
Its brilliant, blinding light. The glorious holy Son of God  
Thy vision ne'er must scan; to saints He stands full revealed,  
But not to unrepented man; His blood must cleanse all saintly souls  
Who hold full title here. Now, O man, the gate swings wide agape,  
Heaven stands full revealed; enter, leave coward fear behind.

Just within the jeweled gate, high-seated and sternly still,  
Sat a saintly form, with close resemblance to mortal man,  
With benign and gracious mien; silent he posed, 'round his brow  
Floated in graceful ringlets his locks, white as winter snow;  
His vesture rival stood, in whiteness, to his hair; serious, sad,

His countenance, on which well marked grace and kindness shone;  
I could but note grim lines of care, faintly graved, 'tis true,  
Yet well defined, potential with disquietude; my entrance tread  
Disturbed him not, nor noted he my presence; in meditation deep  
And profound he silent sat, as one who sought forgetfulness.  
"Holy and immortal one," thus him I addressed, "I crave thy grace;  
As stranger entering here I must, forsooth, seek friendly guidance  
From one who holds inheritance, that I may guiltless forward stray,  
And not by entrance bold disrupt heaven's quiet, blissful harmony."

"Mortal, 'tis I who should pardon crave; to my assigned duty here  
I have proven derelict; endless monotony hath caused inertia  
To overtake my brain; arriving saints pass unnoticed through,  
The gates swing wide at their approach, relieving me of care;  
'Tis waste of time to question saints; their titles are approved  
And duly signed by elder, priest or pope, hence not inspected."

"Immortal one, grant me answer true to questions plainly mouthed.  
Hold me at quiet should I, in earthy ignorance, pass marked lines  
'Twixt things I may know and themes ye may not to mortals speak.  
One earth 'tis current speech that holy Peter guards this gate;  
If this be true, stand I now in converse with that chosen one?"

"'Tis true; I am he who forsook his fishing-net to follow Christ;  
Faithful I trailed His wandering steps, believing, and well I  
Preached and taught His doctrine new; with nimble tongue, loud  
I proclaimed Him Son of God. Proselyted from my father's faith,  
I wrought in the vineyard of my Lord, as fisherman for men;  
With devout, holy faith, I surrendered all, friends, family and home,  
To follow in His lowly steps; 'tis true, I am the lowly fisherman.  
I assign ye as guide one well versed in heaven's devious ways;  
To him give thoughtful heed; mark well as ye advance, lend ear  
To speech he may in explanation grant, and with others ye meet  
Hold converse free; I hold me much in doubt if there be saint  
Who would not freely speak to one still mortal late from earth.  
This to ye I give as firm command: impart no tidings of the times  
Which might the saints enthuse; they hold no heritage on earth;  
Worldly ties are all dissolved, heaven claims their full fealty.  
O'er ye we no jurisdiction claim, save whilst within the gates  
Ye may return to earth burdened with knowledge, heaven culled."

## GUIDE:

Mortal man, unstung by loathsome death, how gained ye entrance here?  
What angel, saint or cherubim granted ye safe pilotage to realms  
To mortals stern forbid? Did canting priest or church'd, crowned  
pope

Shrive thee of every future sin and purify the earthy moulded form  
To reign in heaven, as one redeemed? Hath cruel, blighting death  
Fled the world and sealed forever the yawning grave? Do earthy men  
Hold pass to heaven, unwashed by Christ's cleansing blood? Did Peter,  
The guardian of this realm, aroused from lethargy, grant ye entrance  
free?

Did heaven's jeweled gate swing willing hinge to grant ye passage-  
way?

I stand as one by ignorance chained, in darkness and in doubt.

Yet, O man from happy earth, I greet and joyous welcome ye;  
I question not thy advent here, nor crave I explanation.  
Suffice to know to me a pleasing duty falls to act thy guide.  
Daring man, ye seek knowledge God forbid to living man; I will affirm  
'Twere well the earth might heaven know, it might prevent congestion;  
Bear well in mind, Jesus Christ founded not this gorgeous retreat;  
'Twas planned by John, in wild exotic dream, long years postdating  
Christ's sojourn on earth; in weakened and age-disordered vision,  
John saw descending from above a city, gold-paved, wondrous grand;  
Was this dotage, or inspiration from on high? Of this I opine not;  
Suffice to say, churches hold John's dream as message divinely sent,  
And have enthused the world by fervent speech predicated thereon  
On an old man's ecstatic vagaries. Of this we waive further speech.

In viewing heaven, have well in mind the age in which 'twas planned:  
A gilded age, when Rome ruled the world in pomp and grand display;  
A dark age, when great and wise bended the supple knee to many gods,  
When temples reared their gilded domes, bedecked with sparkling gems,  
High towards heaven's starry vault; ignorant men, by superstition  
chained,

Sought guidance from their faulty gods, by oracles ambiguous spoke;  
An age when pagan darkness chilled the soul, and rendered mortal man  
Blind and wholly helpless, stumbling through the darkness seeking  
light.

From oracles, visions and troubled dreams, judge John by benighted times,

Hold in reserve your worldly verdict, till heaven ye have fully scanned.

Ye have joined in song, if not in prayer, for home of eternal rest  
Where endless day excludes the night, and pleasures banish pain;  
Ye have found it here; there is no soothing twilight: all is day;  
No morning, noon, or gentle eve, no week, no month, nor fleeting year;  
All brilliant light, unchanging day; no changing time, all's at stand;  
Centuries drag their weary flight unnoticed, uncalendared, unsung;  
Eternity holds time at pause; heaven hangs no calendar to mark  
The endless cycle of eternity; no changing seasons glad the eye,  
No winter's snow, or springtime rain, no summer's sunshines ever felt,  
No autumn's ripening breath, no sky above to limit view, no stars,  
Nor moon nor milky way, no gaudy rainbow spans the blushing arch;  
Sunrise ne'er paints the east the roseate hue of morn, nor sunset's  
Golden arrows adorn the western horizon; on lonely river glades  
The seeking eye, one lone tree decks its bank; shadowless it stands,  
No song birds warble in its boughs, no flowers wreath its stem.  
All earthly semblance ends at tree and stream. Earth's greatest joys  
Claim no prototype in heaven; here all things are of strange design,  
Not created to please mankind, but to fulfil John's dotage dream.  
Ye, I trow, will mind this song, sung by pilgrims hitherward bound:

How tedious and tasteless the hours,  
When Jesus no longer I see;  
Sweet prospects, sweet birds and sweet flowers,  
Have all lost their sweetness to me.  
The midsummer sunshine's but dim,  
The fields strive in vain to look gay;  
But when I am happy in Him,  
December's as happy as May.

Well did the poet line the Christian's after life in heaven spent;  
All hours are tedious and tasteless; here no change of time or scene  
To deflect the mind from eternal rest; hours have ceased to be;  
All time is merged into endless, changeless eternity; the present,  
And countless ages hence, are one; sweet prospects viewed on earth  
Are not reproduced in heaven; sweet songbirds and sweet flowers  
Tarry on earth to glad mankind; heaven homes them not; all saints  
May dream of pleasures past, of Mayday flowers and December's snow;  
In heaven there are no changes wrought, no snow or fragrant flowers.

Thus much as prelude have I spoken; we will now make pilgrimage  
Through this wondrous city planned by visionary John, and spend time  
In contemplating its grandeur; and cull lessons for weal or woe  
To burden thy memory when earthward bound. Mark well and faithfully,

Garner by sight and ear all passing scenes and speech; when again  
Ye walk the glorious earth ye may compare old world to heaven.  
We now approach the flowing stream, whose cleansing waters heal  
All nation's ills; well digest this thought: all who enter paradise  
Are previous healed; no earthy sin can enter heaven; all redeemed  
saints

Are purged, made wholly pure, in that holy fount that gracious flows  
From Calvary's sacred brow; saints thirst not, useless flows the flood.  
The tree of knowledge stands a monument of John's senile delusion;  
All saints are mental dwarfs, all minds must needs be equal here;  
A happy medium hath attained, midway 'twixt ignorance and mental  
worth.

On entrance here the energetic mind must call eternal pause, halt,  
And seek contentment in retrogressive rest; shrunken, withered brains,  
Which, during life, scarce chambered thought above the grunting swine,  
At entrance gate sudden expand, to reach medium by heaven allowed  
Another incongruity note: these riches, reckless strewn, precious gems  
And pregnant ores, in wanton confusion greet the eye. Had holy John  
Not better dreamed these treasures safe stored on earth, handy  
And accessible to Christ's followers whilst in life? Ye well know  
Christ's greater flocks below dwell among the poor, where famine  
And pestilence hold high carnival. Frequent the struggle is manifold  
To keep gaunt poverty at stand; sickness and death invade homes,  
Where this prodigal wealth might hold at bay; this as explanation.

Further advancement we'll make, and knowledge cull from resting  
saints.

Ye will make note that saints stroll in kindred clans, as mortals do.  
In groups of churchy faith they clannish gather to sing and shout  
And chant in harmony of heaven's blessed rest; if of recent advent  
They strum the golden harp; if long their sojourn in this realm,  
Indolence hath pruned them of all love for song or twanging harp;  
Long, weary, sluggish rest hath paralyzed the mind for every recreation.

Yonder group of idlers, basking in the light, were idlers on earth;  
Their worldly life in ignorance passed, unknown to all save the few

Who trod the lowly path prescribed by church, to ever walk and work,  
Where poverty and ignorance dwelt, to rescue souls from Satan's grip;  
These lounging saints whilst on earth were firmly chained by poverty  
And swinish sloth; fungi they were, flourishing in darkness and filth;  
Ambitious flame ne'er illumed their sluggish minds; in stupid apathy  
They dragged slow course through life, too indolent for glaring crime.  
They missed hell's crisping flame for want of energy to toy with sin.  
Loud-mouthed religion stirred their superstitious souls, like cannon  
Roaring cheers the weary soldier in the charge. Howling evangelists,  
Ill-trained to teach, excited their ignorant souls to wild excess;  
Trembling with fear of burning hell, they writhe, and howl for grace.  
When exhausted nature, by excitement wrought, passes beyond dim  
lines,

Ill-marked 'twixt sane and visionary state, in exultation they shout:  
My soul stands full redeemed; I see the Holy Christ; His saving blood  
Has washed my every sin away; I'm bound for glory and eternal rest.  
In blissful ignorance they shouting die, their sluggish, shrunken souls,  
Dwarfed and small, are swift convoyed to heaven, to stare and blink,  
With faded eyes, like burrowing mole sudden brought to brilliant  
light.

With all their idle, ignorant indolence, they hold equal rank in heaven  
With the grandest intellect that ever lived, illumed or quitted earth.  
Note them well. Does John's gaudy show fill their souls with joy?

Here are those whose course through life left well-marked trail  
Of gruesome crime, of murders foul, horrible, shocking mankind.  
Hell's burning flame could never cleanse a soul so ghastly foul;  
But through all eternity the brand would stand full shone.  
Their crime-stained record would darkly blot Satan's blackest pit;  
On earth, in life, they stood demarked from every human tie; slimy,  
Bloody and foul the trail left behind; grimy their expunged record.  
In heaven, outraged earthy laws called lasting halt; human justice  
Meted them earned reward; in gloomy prison chambers safely pent,  
They rave and curse the power that holds them chained. Priests  
Invade their cells, devoutly pray their blood-grimed souls reprieve;  
With cowardly cringing the trembling murderer kneels him down,  
And prays to lave his bloodstained soul in that fountain pure,  
Filled with Christ's blood. Assured by priest that heaven's gained,  
The guilty wretch prepares to die; hurled out of life by law's decree,  
His shrieking soul, all fouled and crimsoned with blood and crime,  
Enters heaven 'mid loud acclaim from shouting saints, who sing,

And praise the Lamb, for sinners forgiven. No heaven-tuned harp  
E'er waked pure chords when touched by murderer's bloodstained  
hands.

Yet here in sullen silence they bide; heaven's blissful delights  
Ill suits their shrinking, crime-stained souls. Further we pass.

"There are, O saintly guide, a few encumbering earth who believe  
The teachings of the Christ. In His Book 'tis plainly penned,  
In language mouthed by blessed Lord—He who sheds human blood  
Stands debarred from heaven. Explanation, O guide, I impatient wait."

"Man, ye voice the teaching of the Christ, but know ye not heaven,  
Ye hold in view, was never planned by Mary's Son, I firm avouched.  
This realm was mapped by aged John, and builded by churchy creeds;  
I charge ye, hold the immaculate Son of God innocent of every fault  
Depicted here; 'tis human built and filled by superstition's aid.

"That group, fair-visionsed by the stream, are those who earned rest,  
Their earthly life was spent for others' weal, if well and wise spent,  
Who may rightly judge? Of this I hold no speech. Faithful records  
Of their lives still bide in heaven's vaults. Gainsay not my speech  
When I affirm they hold clear title here; heaven's brightest gems  
May well adorn their brows; the many stars that gem their crowns  
But ill repays their labor for Christ's holy cause. Countless troops  
Of souls redeemed, that daily pass yon pearly gate, speak eloquent,  
In language all may read, their magnitude of Christian zeal. Heaven  
Is scant reward, life-long zeal, they earned far greater bliss.  
For every soul they brought to light, they suffered blighting pain;  
Their Christian zeal ne'er reached its bounds, its zenith or decline;  
Their lives stood monuments of love for holy Christ and sinning man.  
All ties were broken, or held at naught, where human soul was prize;  
Home, friends and family were cast aside, and nature's just demands  
Held not the scales at downward poise when sinners called for aid.  
In foreign climes, in heathen lands, they reared the holy cross.  
Faithful they toiled to save the world, in trusting faith they died;  
And straight to heaven winged their flight, blissful, eternal rest  
Their well-earned reward. Without comment, pass to other scenes.

"Yonder group, strolling on the lea, are those whose lives were spent,  
Close-housed within dark convent walls; in gloomy, haunted cells  
They worshiped God by murdering self; all worldly ties were spurned  
Or smothered 'neath pious delusions; they posed as brides and grooms

Of Romish Church, and Christ, their life-work, gibbering beaded  
prayers  
To pope and man-made saints. To church they bowed as boughten  
slaves;  
By vows eternally bound, they held no thought above priests' com-  
mand,  
Their very souls were merged in church, their body at priests' behest;  
Thus through life they useless passed, leaving no thoughts, or acts,  
To illume their faint-marked trail, to better man or world; a blank,  
Except for church adorned, or lazy priest grown fat, by charity fed,  
From contributions culled from laboring poor. Their path to heaven  
Laid paved by slaughtered human needs; dreary their delusioned lives,  
Every joy designed by God to lighten worldly cares ruthless drowned  
In superstitious fanaticism; bigotry warped their souls and nulled  
The holy cause for which they wrought. A life thus selfish passed  
Cannot expand and grow in grace; thus they won this heavenly goal  
By faulty self-sacrifice. Here their mummied souls find ample pause,  
And granted time to analyze Christ's wondrous love for man; here  
No creed holds high command, no priest, no pope, nor churchy potentate  
Dare mold them to his will; yet their earthly life hath left impress,  
Firm stamped on their wrinkled souls. On earth their vows forbid  
Charity for other creeds; to worship with those of different views  
Damned them through eternity, and cast their human bodies like dogs  
Away from consecrated sepulcher. A lingering taint still shows  
And binds them in clannish groups; as on earth, they stroll and sing,  
And envy all who gained the goal by other routes. Again we pass.

"My guide, on earth these virgin brides stand in high repute  
For acts of charity and deeds of great benevolence; they feed  
The hungry, clothe the poor, and soothe those who groan from pain;  
They letter the holy Christ's command. True, slanderous tongues  
Hath slimed their fame; 'tis howled by grinning Protestant priests  
That convent walls encompass harems foul, filled with Romish maids,  
Heid housed for lecherous priests. Of this I waive discussion."

"Credulous man, thou art blinded by giant hypocrisy; know ye not  
That church and sisters flaunt charity's cloak for worldly gain?  
The Roman Church seeks to rule the world; all is rank hypocrisy;  
Their acts of benevolence and fulsome charity are all for power.  
Enough of worldly themes; earth must bear her burden all alone.  
God ordained, when first He spake created being from chaotic womb,



That man must solve the enigma of life; the future holds mysteries  
That are problems solved by eternity. Our study is of John's heaven.

"Here idling near the river's brink stand those whose earthy life  
Ill-coached them for this gorgeous home. Born in heathen darkness,  
Their lives were spent in savagery; by instinct wild, they ever lived  
In reckless freedom, unrestrained by laws of God or man. Their God  
A spirit who homed on the mountain peak or 'neath its rock-ribbed  
base;

Their religion rank superstition, foul revenge and self-preservation;  
Their God dwelt where volcanoes boil and earthquakes quiet rest;  
He speaks in language for them atuned; the lightning's lurid flash  
Bears message well lettered to their eye; the wind's fierce blast  
Brings tidings from the spirit world, freighted with weal or woe;  
The storm-cloud's gloomy front, frowning and thunder-charged, speaks  
In language eloquent and well interpreted to their untamed minds;  
Thus, in contented ignorance, they dwelt, living close to nature's God.  
The missionaries came, with oily tongues and soft, ambiguous speech;  
With ruthless hands they rent this simple faith to shreds; in place,  
Taught them creed not understood; their happy hunting-ground,  
Their heaven, as taught by sachems old and wise, faded away and died;  
The God so long adored fled his mountain home, the thunder's note  
Bore no commands, the lightning flash no sign; a mysterious cross  
They must adore; to an unknown God bow down; a religion of faith  
Must chain their souls, and turn their lives awry; the wilderness,  
So long their home, must pass to pale-faced tribes; every loving tie  
That bound them to happy earth is rudely snapped; Mary's shadowing  
Held their simple souls in doubt, the Trinity to them a myth  
They could not read. Thus mystified, they drift, in wavering faith,  
Between their fathers' God and churchy creed; shrived by priest,  
They doubting die, are straight convoyed by angels to heaven's gate;  
Here in toic silence they bide, unmoved by shout or saintly song.  
This flowing river mocks desire; a clear, flowing, fishless stream  
Is to them a travesty on creative force; the harp, the singing saints,  
Strike no responsive chord; one long trembling, well-mouthed howl  
From a celestial wolf would stir their sullen souls to greater joy  
Than all the harps and songs of heaven. We pass to other groups."

"Indulge me for brief space, O saintly friend, my interpreter,  
My heavenly guide; fate so ordained that my life be spent  
Contending with the wilds; since giddy youth I've roamed the West

And mingled with the fierce; full well I know their savage ways.  
I now affirm, as Christian truth, red men are less savage than they  
Who boast a Christian heritage. Sainly reds may bide in heaven,  
Sent hitherward by my hand, not slain in wrath or for revenge,  
But by my country's stern command; the cruel wrongs by Indians borne  
Have shocked the world, smudged Christianity with hell's dark slime;  
The wild man, in nature's wild domain, stands nearer, my God, to thee,  
Than any vagrant missionary that ever burdened earth. I have  
spoken."

"Peace, man; pollute not heaven's sanctity by boasting of bloody war;  
Defame not those holy men who wrought for heathen souls; man,  
Mortals stand helpless before God's designs; leave human thought  
behind:

Your mission here's to learn of heaven; guard well thy limber tongue.  
Yonder group, of pompous port and cadence step, are of thy kith,  
Worshippers of bloody Mars; from bloody battlefields they hail,  
Slain ere yet their earthy life had well begun. Their youthful bodies  
Served some potentate as stepping-stones to fame, their dirge,  
Widows' moans and orphans' cries for bread; vicious their trail on  
earth;

Foul famine and grim desolation stalk their course and point  
To countries wrecked, cities burned, as guide-marks left to victory;  
Pernicious the creed that sends them here; 'tis taught on earth  
That he who for his country falls is redeemed from gloomy death;  
Thus they defraud hell by patriotism, so called; remember this:  
He who spills his brother's blood, be it at war or peace, hath soiled  
His soul eternally; no cleansing blood or burning lake can purify  
A murderer's soul. Yet here ye find them, titled and secure, happy,  
I may not judge; of them discourse will end. We pass to others."

"Oh, my gentle guide, pardon my restless tongue; of heaven and saints  
I fain would be full learned; should I by ignorance great offend,  
Or seek knowledge not granted mortal man, call me to lasting halt,  
And fault me not for eagerness. O saintly one, my carnal heart  
Throbs in human pain, fateful anguish holds me in withering grip;  
From glorious earth many whom I adored have journeyed by death,  
I know not whither; I meet them not in this blessed realm. Those  
For whom I vainly search claimed unction from on high, they claimed  
A call direct from God to teach the world and pilot sinners safe  
To heavenly bliss. Tell me, O thou knowing one, where preachers abide;  
Lays there a land, or mansion grand, richer in bliss, for their abode?"

"Man, know ye not most priests are hypocrites? They preach of heaven,

Yet hold close fellowship with hell; if there be burning lake,  
'Tis filled to overflow with evangelists and canting, sniveling priests;  
A very few reach heaven's restful shores; most journey other routes,  
Leading I know not whither; if by chance one slips the guarded gate  
And gains admission to eternal rest, he trembles, fearing his title  
May faulty prove; withal many priestly souls have passed the guard  
That ever stands anear the gate, and ended their last pilgrimage.  
Here they are pruned of earthy wit, their brilliant intellect displayed  
On earth gains them no distinction; the common clown holds equal  
rank

And honor with them above; past energies count for naught."

"Once more, O instructive spirit, pardon my intrusive tongue; grant  
Me light on subjects ill understood; my allotted time I would spend  
Garnering wisdom for fellow man, that I may earthward pass, weighted  
With truths heaven plucked. In holy writ 'tis plainly penned, and  
loud

Vouched for by godly Paul, this saying, voiced by the holy Son of God:  
'In my Father's house are many mansions.' Spoke he in parable, or do  
These mansions, not builded by hand, find station in this realm?"

"Ye trench on matters full discussed as prelude ere we quit the gate.  
Again, I in no uncertain language state Christ builded not this rest;  
Hold Him guiltless of deceiving speech; those glorious mansions stand  
I know not where; Christ's every word was truth. I know some place,  
beyond

This indolent cage of rust, there lies a realm, a pleasing, restful land,  
Builded by Christ, the Son of God, for those who follow His trail,  
Live lives, modeled after He or Paul; there stand no mansions here.  
Man unredeemed, ye have viewed heaven as planned by inspired John,  
And held as Christian home by worldly creeds; with mortal eyes  
Ye have scanned the flowing stream that heads near heaven's throne,  
And trod with unhallowed feet its golden strand; the wondrous tree,  
Revered by church, stands mirrored to thy view; heard saintly songs,  
Well sung and sweetly toned, sang to welcome thee; golden harps,  
Touched by hands freed from sin, have waked harmony to glad thy  
stay;

Now, O guest from earth, I grant ye speech to all who lend ear.  
The first we greet for interview is one whose death dimmed many eyes;

He left on earth a name high carved on fame's polished shaft; he stood

Removed from worldly herd in intellect and godly life; clear of sin  
His record stood on earth, glorious it shines in heaven; his life,  
Well spent, shone resplendent to his fellow men; numerous the souls  
Now peopling heaven bore passport from this sinless one; with him  
Hold speech, remember well his words; when discourse ends, join me."

With reluctant feet and trembling heart I neared this godly saint;  
Thus to him I made address: "Revered and saintly one, grant me, I pray,

Brief discourse, predicated on the Christian's eternal life; pardon,  
I humbly crave, should my address disturb, or its boldness offend; I  
Do but seek wisdom for worldly betterment; speak of self; I hold ye  
Debarred from egotism; thy record in this realm, proclaimed by guide,  
Removes all fulsome praise of self. Speak, O saint; I humbly wait."

"Fair stranger from grand old earth, I greet thee with swelling heart  
And voice a welcome, pregnant with joy, to this the saints' eternal home.

Heaven's firm decree debars inquiry from glorious earth; of paradise  
Must be our dialogue; or of worldly life past; shed at the grave, life  
Here were better not illumed to those who linger yet on happy earth.  
Deem me not a boaster, or vainglorious in my ready speech, but believe  
When I affirm that on old earth I stood peer to the wise and great;  
I was courted, flattered by the world, and granted station high; fame  
Wove a garland for my brow, a wreath that shone resplendent on earth

And yet stands green in history; 'tis well penned, ye may read the lines;

Eloquent I was, and deeply learned in religion's tangled web; I stood  
A monument for Christ, a worker for His cause, a pillar in His church;  
My high attainments were not gifts divine, but came from ceaseless toil,

And endless labor at study spent; far into night I burned bright light;  
When the world was wrapped in slumber's arms, I pondered and long pored

O'er tomes moldy and old, pregnant with ancient mysteries and lore;  
By studies hard and rigid application, I mastered their aged stores;  
With knowledge thus gained, I taught the world, with no puffed pride

Or vainglorious oratory, but from a believing soul, sustained by faith; With faith I spoke, I loved my theme; the tenets of Christian creed Found deep lodgment in my heart; like pious Paul of old, I loved, I Gloried in my work, and with a devotion honest, pure and sublime, I Toiled as few men toil; I wrought for God, and human souls, a faith That knew no wavering, sustained my Christian poise, a blissful hope, Founded on Christ's holy word, filled my soul, cheered me on my way; I hourly drank devoutly at religion's soul-cleansing fount; earnest, Aye, my heart was, ever glowing and aflame with heaven's wondrous fire.

With perfect faith and prayerful heart I sought no indolent pause, With a devotion conceived in perfect faith in Christ I worked; I was lost to self, my strength, my every thought were given God. Thus in faith sublime I taught, and earnestly prayed for help divine; The morning's first golden raylets heard my songs of holy praise, The sunset bore to heaven a prayer from a pure and contrite heart. When chilling doubts would steal athwart my beauteous dream of joy, They'd pass like mist before a glowing sun when I knelt in prayer; I sang of mansions not built by hand, in the Christian's home above; I sang of streets, all paved with gold, in the home prepared for saints; I preached of the beautiful angels of light, who dwelt in holy heaven; I dreamed of the wondrous river of life, that flows from the throne; I sang of the glorious tree, that blooms and fruits upon the shore; Of the pearly gates that willing swing to pass the saints to rest. Thus I labored, thus I preached of heaven, as visioned by holy John. I dispensed light, as light was given me; by constant, faithful prayer I sought God's holy will; I felt the burden of my work, but wearied not; An unswerving faith in Christ, my Lord, held me firm to duty's path; My soul was filled with holy awe and boundless love for sinful man. I ever stood in the Christian van, battling for Christ and heaven; Self was forgotten in the strife, my cross deemed but feather-weight, If the holy cause was faithful served by bearing it, my every thought Bent and broke with holy love of God. I suffered in the carnal flesh That my crown in heaven might glitter with many stars; faithful lived And wrought for God, who gave me life, strength, power and blessed hope;

When the chilling finger of death touched with agony my broken form, I met the boatsman, old and grim, in exultation, born of perfect faith. Death could boast no sting, the grave no victory; my soul, triumphant, Broke the bonds of earthy imprisonment, and soared to peaceful home, To join in the never-ending life and eternal rest of John's heaven."

"Holy saint, hold me guiltless of sacrilegious scoff, which I disclaim,  
When I sincerely ask does heaven reward thy worldly toil? Is saint-  
hood

Full recompense for a life laboriously spent? Does heaven's peaceful  
rest

Acquit ambition's flames? Does vision of mental progress disturb rest?"

"Cease, mortal; ye reek not what ye ask. At heaven's glorious entrance  
All human passions take their leave; like Satan's guiles they're bid  
To speed from hence; all mental progress is strict forbid in paradise.  
Here 'tis rest, soul-rusting rest; nothing disturbs moldering saints.  
Be still, unruly tongue, ere I sacrilegious speak. Pass on; adieu,  
adieu."

"Once again, O guide, human thoughts in riotous revelry demand  
Utterance and lucidation. Stands this honored guest of heaven  
Above the common herd, that aimless strayed through life, leaving  
No intellectual carvings on fame's high, polished shaft, no mark  
Beside their dim-traced trail, to guide posterity to better ways?  
Holds he no higher stand, no reverence from ye or lesser saints?"

"Man, man, ye prattle as a forward child; hath my prelude speech  
Thus early slipped the leash and wandered from memory's vaults?  
If so ye'll journey earthward ballasted light for steerage way.  
Bear that, my recent speech, in mind; 'twas well voiced, well filled  
With explanatory verbiage; there are no strata in paradise; intellect  
Heirs no exalted throne; he who idled life away, left no record,  
But an intellectual desert, holds equal rank with him who conquered  
Earth by wisdom, or Christ's saving grace; heaven applauds no fame.  
The murderer, grimed with human blood, the midnight prowling thief,  
The harlot, from her den of vice, if proper shrived by churchy priest,  
Pass the pearly gate, welcomed by twanging harp and shouting saints,  
Hold rank as grand in heaven as old Saint Paul attained. We pass.  
Yonder saint, clothed as becomes her sex, was of prolific womb.  
She peopled earth with numerous progeny; heaven claims but few  
Who nourished at her breast; most who sprung from her sojourn  
In other realms, I wist not where. Hold speech with her, if she lends  
Willing ear to thy discourse. If silence suits her mood, pass by,  
And follow on my trail; others we may find yielding nimble tongue."

With due respect I bowed me to this gentle saint; in silence  
I awaited her salute; for lengthened space I voiceless stood;  
Unmoved and silent sat the saint, with lusterless eyes she noted

My approach, yet mouthed no welcoming; at peace she seemed, yet  
No blissful joy illumed her brow, her face, placid, expressionless,  
Gave no token of peace or pain. Impatient of delay, I spoke:  
"Holy mother, honored guest of heaven, I give ye greeting true,  
From distant earth, not fulsome or shallow spoke, but from heart  
That throbs from human impulses, fresh from the world ye fled.  
I fain would short converse hold, if ye incline to grant me speech;  
Deem me not presumptuous or bold in thus disturbing thy revery.  
I come as penitent comes to holy Christ, seeking wholesome light;  
Should I disturb thy gentle heart, or cause one fleeting pain,  
Bid me by gesture pass, and voice no answer to my quest. A burden  
Holds my heart at pause, and shapes questions pregnant with woe;  
On earth 'tis family ties that bind and blend the blooded kin;  
These sacred gifts hold the world in friendly attitude. Mother,  
No other word lisped by child or man can fill a heart so full;  
A mother's love shines holy as the love of Christ; aye, men bow  
The willing knee to a sweet mother's love, who never kneel to Christ.  
Love of children burdens her soul, should they wander from right;  
Anguish gnaws her heart and sends her gravewise in grim despair;  
Dwells this pure love in heaven? Does love of child still warm  
The maternal heart, or are all earthy ties severed at the tomb?  
Do ye here in paradise e'er dream of loved ones ye nursed on earth?"

"O man from happy earth, what mission brings ye here? Hath earth  
Grown old and dead to love, hath human sympathy fled the world?  
Ye'll find no family ties in heaven; all human love rests entombed,  
With moldering body, in the grave; here all is love enforced  
By heavenly rules, not love of kin; 'tis love that none may analyze.  
Do I love those who formed being in my womb and nursed my breast?  
Nay, God's justice drove them hence; I bow to holy will; I remember,  
But without regret, their fall; in heaven we heir no pain or grief;  
All must dwell at perfect rest, heartaches are left below on earth;  
Sighs for others' woes ne'er pass the grave; all human passions,  
Revered on earth, are stern forbid in paradise; here all must rest  
And meditate on nothing; family ties are broken, kindred estranged,  
Holy love, that on earth held sway is blasted and forbid. Nothing  
Held sacred in human life can pass the entrance way to heaven;  
Here we shout, sing and strum the golden harp in seeming ecstasy,  
But at heart we know no love. Pass on, lest I forget and prattle  
On themes forbid by rigid rule. I wish ye joy, a long farewell."

"Fair heavenly guide, comment from me may savor much of sacrilege  
And stand debarred by sacred rule; if I o'erleap boundary lines,  
'Twixt allowable and unallowed, call me to pause, bid my rebellious  
Tongue stand paralyzed still. Worldly thoughts in wild confusion  
Crowd my throbbing brain and clamor for utterance. On distant earth  
A mother's love for child shines bright as Christ's love for souls;  
Nations are held coherent by family ties; civilization's strongest,  
Grandest stay is love for kith and kin. Does heaven sever this tie,  
And purge the human heart of love? Do mothers sing and praise the  
Lamb

Whose offspring burn in hell? Do children strum the harp and shout  
Whose parents writhe in endless pain? Are all human passions, given  
By creative God, debarred from Christian heaven? If my discourse  
Stings thy ear, or berths distress in answering, pass them as chaff,  
And read me reprimand big with heaven's and saintly disapproval."

"O man, thy call to heaven comes from source I may not ever know,  
Nor care I to understand; this I infer: ye are sent hitherward to  
learn

By eye and subtle ear of the Christian's home beyond the gloomy tomb;  
To ye I grant all is due that saints may lawfully impart; I incline,  
As heaven's appointed pilot and interpreter, to wield no sluggish  
tongue.

Creeds have made a creative God, that gloats and snarls at woes;  
They've torn the human heart in twain, and cast the wreck to hell;  
A mother's love, sacred though it be, finds no lodgment in this realm;  
'Tis claimed God's justice heals every wound, balms every bleeding sore,  
Soothes the broken heart, and opes the blinded eyes of him who loves  
His kind. To him well charged with churchy faith a burning hell  
Emphasizes God's justice and holy love; all torment Devil invented  
Is retribution mild for smallest sin. 'Twas widely taught by church  
That infants not a span in length are floundering in a burning lake,  
There to fry and fret throughout eternity, while the saintly mother,  
From whose womb the charring babe came, sits crowned with heaven's  
Sparkling gems, singing and thumbing the harp, in holy glee. Deem me  
Not a jester, or defamer of this realm, I but speak as truth presents.  
When human soul takes flight from earthy sphere, the loving heart  
Is left to wither in the grave; no sympathy, sorrow, pain or tears  
Take upward flight from glorious world, heaven bars them entrance;  
Now, oh man, my answer ye have culled, I rest me content; God's  
justice



I must question not. Ye are not chained by churchy creed, ye analyze,  
And think as thou listeth. Let discourse cease, we pass to other saints.

“Now, oh man of war and strife, meet one whose record, earthly made,  
For blood and savage cruelty, would blush Satan’s swarthy cheek,  
And tremble hell from burning pit to blazing dome. Note him well,  
He yet blinks murderous eye in this pure realm of peace; the brand  
Yet bides, a blighting scar; heaven is foul debauched by granting  
Home to soul so black. He at death was shrived by blushless priest,  
Passed the gate, ’mid loud acclaim, from singing saints and cherubims;  
He dwells with titles clear, inherits all blessings accorded saints;  
Of him further comment is withheld. He bears a glibbish tongue, ready,  
Aye eager, to inflict the willing ear recounting earthly woes.  
With him ye might with profit speak, a kindred strain together  
Ye might lustily sing; he’s charged with history, replete with crime.”

The one thus called to view stood apart, all alone, yet seemed  
To friendly intercourse inclined; to him I instant frankly spoke:  
“Immortal one, from whence on earth ye fled, my verbose interpreter  
Deigned not to disclose, nor imparted he, thy worldly cognomen;  
From language used I infer, ye left a flaming record, worldly made;  
If ye incline to historic discussion, I vouch a listening ear,  
Will hold my waggish tongue at bay, till ye reach finish pause;  
’Twould please me greatly, for ye to voice thy country, and name.”

“I am Thomas of Torquenada; on earth I held commission in church,  
My history yet burdens earth, by some revered by most cursed,  
As fiend incarnate, sent from Satan’s hell bearing damning woes;  
Judge me not harshly, oh man from kindly world, let mercy plead,  
And drop a cleansing tear on my record, ignorant made; remember,  
When on earth, I stood on border lands, ’twixt Christ, and paganism;  
On my right, a church exacting, corrupt, ruled by unscrupulous men;  
On my left, superstition, black and savage, a heathen barbarism;  
The world chaotic, and deep in sin, the wrath of God, was manifest;  
I was at best a willing tool, wielded by a wicked, scheming pope,  
Who held my soul in grip; I wrought as best I knew, was enthused,  
By churchy work assigned to me; I saw a smiling Christ approve,  
And bless my unhallowed skill; the Roman inquisition owes to me  
Its perfection, and its power; I smote with no soft rod, or hand;  
The enemies of holy church, all who doubted holy pope or priest,  
Were sent to learn of me; I loved the church, the church upheld

And applauded my skill; to me the shrieks of dying heretic were music  
Sweet as angels' songs; in their writhing forms and horrid pain  
I saw heaven's applauding smile; I was honest in churchy work, hence,  
My admission here, my every thought held blessed Christ in view,  
My every judgment rendered, to me, bore inspiration from my God;  
I fashioned no instrument of pain, that was not divinely planned.

"There is eloquence in memory, when pruned of conscience sting,  
When life's dark pages are scanned, by one purged of worldly sin.  
The darkest stain of mistaken life bears no remorseful pangs  
To those who dwell in heaven; full memory yet distinct remains,  
But conscientiousness of crime is dead; I may recall and speak  
Of my grewsome past, without shudder or doleful sigh; the records  
Are sure effaced; those dying in church, and priestly shrived,  
Stand clean and pure before the bar, hence I may freely speak,  
And hold review of a past I fain would bury in oblivion black;  
If heaven's justice admitted conscience to pass the pearly gates,  
Many saints would shake, as ague-smitten, with unfeigned horror,  
At retrospective view; but heaven's just, divine appointment bars  
All earthly passions entrance here; conscience is shed below.  
A memory surcharged with worldly crime finds lasting full reprieve,  
Suffers no remorse; all who pass yonder portal bright leave  
Human acts behind, be their record clean, pure, or grimy black,  
As the fumes of hell; if they died in church, and proper shrived,  
By priest, the book of life is purged from every record traced.

"Thus much I frankly confess, no mortal scribe can faithfully pen  
The horrors of Papal inquisition; language is too weak in words;  
Listen yet for brief space, view my record with human repugnance,  
But remember, inspired precedent is found for every ghastly crime,  
Plain lettered in holy writ; all chosen people of God, from Abraham,  
To Roman Pope, hold command divine, to smite, destroy and scourge  
The enemies of God and Christ; supreme must be their power on earth;  
Christ and holy church must wield a power that heretics may fear.  
Humanity must suffer, blood must flow, to cleanse the world from sin.  
When created world from chaos fled, God decreed man's punishment.  
Go back to Eden's perfect pair, to creation's blushing dawn; note well  
The precepts, by inspiration penned, and handed down to Adam's race,  
How blood has held repute, a savor sweet, to God and holy heaven.  
The first born Cain, with offerings culled from fruitful earth,  
Pure and unsullied by aught that's foul, met chilling stern rebuke,

Whilst Abel's crimsoned sacrifice proved as sweet incense on high.  
 From Adam's birth, down till Christ died on Calvary's rugged cross,  
 Has ever been a trail of human blood, of vengeance, and cruel death.

"Follow well Joshua's blood-stained path; he slew and savage burned,  
 To drive God-created man from heritage their own, that murderous,  
 Envious Jews, the chosen band of God, might possess productive lands,  
 And dwell in homes not gained by honest toil; by divine command,  
 Women pure as God's angels are, their only crime, wedlock's holy bond,  
 Were slain by murderous hands, to appease a vengeful, wrathful God;  
 Innocent babes, who knew no sin, were torn from sobbing mothers'

arms,

From last embrace, and by ruthless Jewish soldiers slain, for what,  
 Finite minds will never grasp, the infinite wisdom of their God.  
 All, all were slain, save innocent maidens who knew not man, of these,  
 By august command, harlots were made, for the amorous Jewish mob;  
 By authority divine, the solar laws were swung awry, the glowing sun,  
 Refulgent orb of day, was held high poised in heaven's dome, to light  
 The slaughtering host to kill; the moon, blushing queen of night,  
 Was bid her wanton speed abate, and stand in heaven, still at rest,  
 That her pure gleam might light the trail of fleeing fugitives.  
 Thus down the path of recorded time a trail of crimsoned blood;  
 Then must finite man be cursed who in ignorance followed full well,  
 The precepts of his God, and purged the holy church from heresy?  
 Enough, I weary of historic speech, much I might unfold that would  
 The grand old world horrify; in deference to holy church, I pause."

"Grewsome thy history, yet fair recited, for which receive, oh saint,  
 Thanks I tender you, 'twas well intoned for human ear. Your record  
 Stands well penned by clerky scribe, 'tis read with trembling awe;  
 Rome, the mother of all creeds, fain would shift the burden weight,  
 Of inquisitorial crimes, and black thy name, by charging ye with all;  
 As ye sow so shall ye reap; thus sayeth the Christ; Rome's proud  
 church,

Once ruled the world, to-day is shorn of power, the pope's chained,  
 Unruly prisoner, in Vatican; grand Catholic France, once the stay,  
 Of churchy power on earth, has by law decreed that Romish church  
 Must bend a begging knee to state; priestly rule is forever gone."

"Cease, man, hold thy leaky tongue," thus spake my guide; "stand at  
 halt.

Ye know from Peter's charge, saints hold no heritage on earth, or owe  
Fealty to church or state; are by heaven denied worldly news;  
Ye bear a tongue that may curtail thy sojourn here; beware, profit  
By my warning speech; unruly tongues have earned lasting despair.  
Behold this guest, ye knew hi mwell on earth; in paradise renew  
The friendship clipped by death; to him ye may speak a language,  
Well attuned for savage ears; be timely warned, o'erstep no lines  
Well drawn and sacred held in heaven; ye may together freely speak,  
Of past time, antedating death. The world owes him idle thought,  
Heaven grants him full rank; as one redeemed from sin and death.  
When ye have tired of dialogue, find me at yonder flowing fount."

Ere my sluggish tongue could form address, my old-time friend spake:  
"Well met, my former western chum; wthi swelling heart I gladly  
greet,

And welcome ye, hold ye in fond remembrance, yield ye greeting loud,  
And hilarious as on pleasant earth; 'twould please me well to again  
Partner thee, roam the wild world, and view the scenes of early life.  
Listen, the western wilds yet trouble thought, e'en here in heaven,  
Not as on earth, in vicious form, that breeds regret, but purified;  
I may freely speak of our dubious past, and do no violence to rules;  
May live again in lawless freedom, as we together lived, in years agone,  
Reckless we trod the trackless plain, seeking trail to unknown land,  
We blazed a track that others less daring might follow in our wake.  
Wild the denizens of that land, less fierce than we, who ever stood,  
Willing for the fray, be it for passing sport, or battling for life;  
As age crept on, a longing seized my soul for peace and lasting rest;  
Remorse held me in withering grip, my past like giant mountains  
Barred my frightened soul from paradise; at heart, I knew grim agony;  
I sought the better way, by earnest, agonizing, heartfelt prayers;  
I purged my soul from crime, and laid my sinful heart, all contrite,  
Low down at Jesus' feet; I bathed in the fountain of His pure blood,  
And arose spotless from all sins; henceforth lived a life for Christ;  
My every thought was given Christ; faithful and well I wrought,  
To save man's sinful soul from hell. In earth's foul repulsive dens  
I fearless dwelt, to labor with the lost; none fell so low in sin,  
Black mire, to get below my helping hand; my life, my time my all,  
Was freely given, to expiate my sins; my cross grew hard to bear  
When mind strayed back to olden times; the lawless west would call,  
And smiling beckon my return, but kneeling low at Christ's holy feet,  
Would drive the pleasing tempter hence. At last, tired, worn and spent,

I triumphant passed death's chilling stream, and landed wholly saved,  
Rejoicing at heaven's gate, here my troubled soul found lasting rest."

"My old-time friend, for as such I fain would hold ye in memory,  
Pardon my intrusion on thy rest, and grant me answer true; I ask,  
In all earnestness, and will long debate the answer given, is rest  
And contentment so perfect, that thy former life stands debarred?  
Has heaven cast oblivion's mantle o'er thy past? Lingers it yet,  
Repugnant to thy memory? Has the glory of this blissful life  
Effaced forever thy former self? Comes there no longing of heart?  
Hear ye no calling voices from the west, no echoes from the wilds?"

"Aye, the luring call from out the wild stings my willing ear;  
Ye who have trod the wilderness know well that pleasing call;  
The glorious mountains, God's monuments on earth, haunt my view,  
The spreading plains, carpeted with living green, fill my reveries;  
The sighing winds that fan the brow are whisperings to the soul,  
Are wandering sighs from far-off shores where happy hearts abide.  
Oh happy earth, thy beauteous flowers, bedecking thy plain, call me,  
From heaven's dull repose; song birds' joyous notes are sweeter far  
Than golden harps, by angels played; the dewdrops' sparkling gem  
Outshine the grandest jewel found in heaven's brilliant display.  
Pass on, leave undisturbed my visions of glorious west. Good-by."

"Once more, oh suffering one, bear infliction from my lawless tongue.  
I find human memory hath slipped past destroying death, holding sway;  
All saints with whom I hold discourse remember well their life past;  
And speak glibly of worldly deeds, seem much inclined to prate, boast,  
Egotistically of churchy work, done whilst yet in life, on goodly earth.  
Are there no sacred history faultless traced and wholly true, penned  
By holy hands, treating of heaven? If there be sacred pages traced,  
Oh saint, would worldly eyes, unwashed from sin, defame their sacred-  
ness?"

"Again human curiosity hath loosed thy ever ready tongue, berthing,  
Queries not forbid, yet lightly burdened with wisdom. In answering,  
Little effort required, small time consumed. All heaven's ope to view;  
There is no past, hence no scribe is called to pen blank history;  
Time carves no dates, eternity lends no shadowing, no change allowed,  
No change hath startled heaven, it stands complete, unchangeable. Time,  
Nor endless eternity, dare innovation; time nor eternity records keep,  
To rest, to sing and strum the golden harp, is all of Christian heaven.

"Meet one who quit the world reluctantly, craved not endless rest,  
 Active in life, ambitious and filled with human energy; indolence,  
 By heaven enforced, hath dwarft his soul, and stunned his active mind.  
 The grave called pause to his ambitious planning, it stilled a heart  
 That throbbed for worldly betterment. Restless and ill content, he  
 Roams the golden streets, and culls small comfort, from saintly life,  
 If he be found in speakish mood, great entertainment I freely vouch,  
 If churlish in reply, pass on, loose not his biting tongue. I wait."

In fear, I drew me near this uncertain saint, with chilling doubt,  
 I thus made speech: "Gentle sir, I, a fleeting guest of heaven, in quest  
 Of knowledge honest gained, make bold to claim thy ear, for space,  
 Not fixed by time or rigid rule, but as suits thy present mood;  
 I humbly crave indulgence, will cheerful pass if ye be not inclined  
 For discussion. Why I sojourn, heaven entertained, I must dodge reply,  
 Believe me, I sought no journey hitherwise, nor ever voiced a prayer,  
 Burdened with solicitous yearning for this realm. When heaven's gate  
 Swung wide to grant me passageway, I held doubt, I thought it dream,  
 A passing panorama; time will interpret true this wondrous mystery.  
 Of this I stand me firm convinced, heaven plays no idle pranks, hence,  
 My quitting earth, ere death had loosed the prisoned soul, had cause,  
 Deep freighted for weal or woe; of this, oh saintly listener, I waive,  
 Further discussion. I would inquiry make, pregnant with faith, on  
 reply

Tempered to my understanding. Breathes there a soul, if heaven holds  
 An atmosphere, who never thinks, or dreams of earth? Do saintly  
 hearts

Hold no yearning for glorious world? Have ye no kindly thoughts  
 For those ye quit at death? Was life complete when called to eternity?"

"Man from grand old earth, I joyous greet and welcome ye, with glad-  
 ness

I can but faint express. A living touch from happy earth is boon beyond  
 All heaven holds to grant. Angel, saint nor Christ, panoplied in guise,  
 Heaven approved, could cheer my heart like mortal man. To ye, oh man,  
 I owe a debt, that may uncanceled stand, throughout long eternity.  
 Brief must be our discourse, the subjects heaven affords are limited,  
 With ye I may hold converse well understood; my pleasant earthy life  
 Had not its zenith reached when ye to manhood attained. Therefore,  
 Like environments shaped our lives, ye to war and bloodshed inclined,  
 Whilst I sought different way; pardon my reference speech; who, I ask,

May gainsay my after thought, when I affirm, thy wild and lawless way,  
Culled from generous world, greater delights, than changeless eternity  
Holds for pardoned saints? Marvel not at this, my sacrilegious speech.  
Know ye, no treason dwells in this realm; therefore I guiltless stand,  
And hold free grant to picture heaven as 'tis found, a land of rest.  
On earth I taught a doctrine as I was taught, old and worn, outgrown,  
By world and man; a theology dogmatic, a relic of dark medieval past,  
Held in adhesion, by tradition, and senile superstition; Jesus Christ  
Simple creed is dead, is surely gone, o'er its grave is reared ritualism;  
The church of God hath fallen low, is in decay, the only worshiped God  
Is cast from gold, not formed as calf, but coined in Cæsar's name.

"On earth we built a heaven, planned by superstitious dreamy John,  
Who cast on an isle, suffered from inanition, and dreamed of joys  
Celestial, found above the clouds, in indolent rest; John saw a city,  
Builded of gold, gemmed with precious stones, let down from open sky.  
This visionary city from above, viewed by an old man, faint and weak,  
The Christian devotee, devoutly prays to enter, this wondrous land,  
This jeweled home, when death hath clipped the weakling thread,  
holding

The human soul to earth. Here everlasting day abides, eternity rolls,  
As one endless, changeless day, centuries have dragged sluggish flight,  
Uncalendared by angel or saint redeemed; no starting day or ending  
night;

None note the flight of time, there is no time; all is silent merged  
Into eternity, that leaves no trail to illume its slow, weary flight;  
To rest, eternal rest, are all condemned, who enter paradise, wills dead,  
Ambition chained, and progress stern forbid, by heaven's rules. Here  
In stupid indolence all saints abide, they rest, they rust in peace;  
The crown is won, no further stimuli for thought or work; so be it,  
As ye sow, so shall ye reap. 'Twas thus we builded our heavenly home,  
In it we must dwell, rest and rust, throughout an endless eternity."

"Listen, on earth we burdened prayer with pleading eloquence, hoping,  
To pass eternity in blissful rest, begged for mansions in the skies,  
Where endless joy forever reigned, where sorrow dare not come. Death,  
That cruel monster, that sorrows earth, is banished for evermore,  
Where endless day exclude the night, and pleasures never end; where  
Harps of gold by angels played waked rare and glorious melodies;  
Where chanting saints, from sin redeemed, fill heaven with harmony;  
A land of rest, lasting eternal rest, dwelling in a heaven, builded

And planned by churchy creeds; the burden of all prayers was rest.  
Hearken to my speech, note well, and deep plant in memory, this truth,  
One beauteous summer day on earth were worth eternity in John's  
heaven."

There's beauty in the morning,  
When the night queen quits the sky,  
The stars fold in their raylets,  
Frightened, from the day-god fly,  
When all nature wakes from dreaming,  
Sheds the drowsy cloak of night,  
When the mountains and the valleys  
Shine in soft gold tinted light.

There's beauty at the noontide,  
When the sun rays slanting fall,  
Light the world in wondrous glory,  
With a gladdening smile for all,  
When the songbird seeks the tree top,  
Where the lazy breezes blow,  
And the brooklet softly murmurs,  
Sparkling in the sunlight's glow.

There's beauty in the evening,  
When twilight spreads her veil,  
O'er valley and o'er hilltop,  
Following the sun's bright trail  
When the heavens softly redden,  
Reflect the distant dying light  
Of the setting sun to westward,  
Yielding sovereignty to night.

"Were prayers allowed in this gilded cage, this my prayer unceasingly.  
Give me the world, the great warm, restless world, the glorious earth,  
Peopled with mortal man, whose heritage is sorrow, sin, and doleful  
death,  
Peopled with men whose hearts are generous, honest and true, that  
throb  
For others' woes, and feel the pang and cruel sting for human pain,  
With ready tears for worldly grief, and helping hands for mortal  
needs;



Men with minds active, energetic, progressive, that know no indolent rest,

Men striving, never tiring, who delve and dig, no yielding, not weary,  
Never fainting by the wayside, men who know no failure or sad defeat,  
But ever moving forward, onward, until labor meets a glorious reward;  
Give me old earth again, let me once more behold refulgent morning sun  
Bathing the gladsome world in a shimmering sheen of burnished gold,  
Let me hear the songbird's joyous note, greeting day with happy song;  
Piping gladsome welcome to the glorious summer sun. Let me hear again

The happy songs of harvest times, as the reapers fell the ripened grain.  
Let me once more shudder at the thunder's deaf'ning crash, see lightning

Leap and quiver, in lurid splendor, athwart the storm cloud's gloomy front;

Let me hear old ocean's murmur, as the tide-waves kiss the thirsty shore;

Give me the gusty blasts of winter, the blizzard's cold fateful breath,  
Let me stand where earthquakes rend the land, and cyclones deadly roar,

Trembles the defenseless world; let me live where pestilences have birth,

Where war and famine stalk the land, and death starts friendly tears.  
On earth where man holds fellowship with man, as brother firm and true,

Give me a human heart again, with love for all God-created human souls,

Or blot me from eternity's record, and give me oblivion dark and eternal.

"Bear for me this message back to earth, give it wide advertisement,  
As coming from one who in life eloquently and honestly portrayed  
The gold-paved streets, the wondrous throne and the gates of pearl;  
Gave wide indulgence to visions of Christian life beyond the grave;  
Now after brief space of heaven's subduing indolence, and corroding rust,

I in all earnestness and holy truth make proclamation boldly thus,  
I had rather be a progressive energetic philosopher in burning hell  
Than a saint redeemed, corroding, rusting in mind, dwelling in heaven.  
Enough, pass on, there are older saints, that fain would greeting give  
To one late from glorious earth. Farewell, hold me in lasting memory."

"Oh saint of truth, thou wieldest a cutting tongue; 'tis passing strange;  
 Such language smites the ear from one redeemed; yet if mine open eyes,  
 Ready ears, have served me well, ye do no violence to honest truth;  
 Faithful Christian hearts, yet laboring on earth, hope for great joys,  
 Grandeur far, than heaven hangs to view; if John-created heaven stands,  
 Full shone to my human gaze, few men on earth would labor hard to  
 gain

Such disappointing goal. Speak, oh loquacious one, has heaven, advertised  
 tised

By priests and strolling evangelists, no better show, held in reserve?"

"Man, ye have witnessed all of worth, there's little more of paradise,  
 The great white throne, source of celestial light, stands not in view,  
 Christ's mercy shrouds it from human view, its dazzling glare would  
 Blight the lens of sinful man; render blind one who quit the earth,  
 Uncleansed from sin, unknown to death. Y've scanned the stream, and  
 stood

Beneath the spreading tree, ye heard the saintly choir sing, and viewed  
 The strolling saints, seeking rest, y've witnessed all of heaven's show."

"Oh thou disgruntled one—pardon the term, none other suits thy case—  
 Can ye no demit procure to quit this realm, and journey where ye list,  
 And dwell an energetic philosopher? Much I fear thy energetic mind  
 Might grow full warm for philosophic thought; thus reflecting I halt;  
 But would further inquiries make, if ye feel inclined for ready answer.  
 Believe ye this heaven, visioned by aged John, fills all of God's design?  
 Must all mankind make or miss this paradise? Or does hell's burning  
 lake

Hold all who failed to pass yon gate? Are there no lands, or worlds,  
 Where wandering souls, too pure for hell, yet unredeemed by Christ,  
 Find homing place? These thoughts burden mankind with chilling  
 gloom."

"Mortal man, ye make jest of sentiments I spoke as honest truth;  
 Were demits granted to quit this realm, heaven would stand depopu-  
 lated;

Placards plain lettered should ever swing above yonder entrance gate,  
 Well illumed and readable, 'All who enter here, leave human energies  
 behind.'

Hear me, and bear to earth my heaven avouched views, there lays a  
land,

God created and designed, for souls not warped by creeds, a home, a  
Sunbright world, peopled by souls who loved creation's God, but knew  
not

Churchy creed, or followed doubtful rules on earth, a land where  
energies

And progressive thought hold sway, where ambition fills the mind,  
Where human love is not debarred, where children cling to mothers'  
knee,

And mothers' hearts are not as stone, where families unbroken joyous  
meet,

And dwell in perfect harmony; land where merit meets reward, and  
intellect

Still upward soars, and reason illumines all souls; where superstition,  
Blighting curse, is never known or feared, a land where glorious day  
Enthuses the active mind to work, and night brings restful sweet  
repose.

Where lays this delightful world I, nor saint, nor mortal man may  
know,

Be it on twinkling star, or blazing sun, no telescope hath caught its  
gleam.

Great God, and those who've reached that clime, may map its boundary  
line.

When to earth ye homing speed, be not depressed by churchy creeds;  
God, the Creator, condemns no soul to hell, or to this realm of indo-  
lence;

'Tis churchy vagaries that people heaven with disgruntled souls; O man,  
From glorious happy earth I have done; I bid ye God-speed, farewell."

With troubled heart I joined my guide, thus to him addressed;

"Once more, oh charming soul, must I disturb thy revery, and trench  
On subject doubtful; well have I digested thine opening speech, yet  
Find no wordy paragraph covering my recent dialogue. Of truth, ye  
Did right well diagnose yonder case; he wieldeth a stinging tongue,  
And voices sentiments strangely worded for one dwelling in heaven;  
Have ye no stringent rules, bridling tongues that too freely wag?"

"Man, thy tongue is loosely hung, and quick to tire of silence; know ye,  
There are no codes or laws compiled governing saints above. Heaven  
Appoints no censor to cull forbidden thoughts; all thoughts are free;

The mental energies for coining thought are alone curtailed, dulled;  
No thoughts are coined in paradise; all bear earthy mould, are dragged  
From memory's vaults, coined before death; once a soul passes the gate,  
It holds free grant from all restraint; no treason or sacrilege exists  
In this grand realm ye now inspect; all cleansing's done beyond the  
grave;

Entering souls whose passport stands inspect are granted freedom full  
For thoughts previous matured. There were no sins defined by aged  
John,

Hence no records penned to blush the cheeks of croaking saints.

"Yonder gloomy saint 'twere well to interview; he birthed a creed on  
earth,

Promulgated a doctrine quaint, yet wholly pure, passed to celestial home  
Many souls ignored by other creeds; peace his theme, honesty his  
motto;

War and bloodshed chilled his heart, and sunk his peaceful soul in  
gloom;

Good his record earthy made, clear stands his title in heaven; fanati-  
cism

Curtailed his worldly usefulness, held his infant church in small  
repute;

One crime laid to his charge; dwelling in gloom, he saw no beauty on  
earth,

Nor heard no pleasing sounds; his untrained voice weird discord makes  
When singing in our choir; his unskilled fingers mar the sweetest tone  
Of well strung harp, tuned for nimble touch; to him speak, if so  
inclined,

If not, we'll search for brighter fronts, where gloom left no impress."

"Oh, thou monument of gloom"—this to the saint my opening speech—  
"why sad

In this bright sphere of song and harmony? Hath earthy sadness  
wrapped

Thy redeemed soul in darkness? Holds heaven no balm for saddened  
hearts,

No joys that drive all sorrows earthwise, from whence they came?  
Creeds,

Claims, earth breed no sorrow heaven cannot heal. Vouch ye this doc-  
trine?

Hath thy sorrow found no antidote? Oh, saint, read me this riddle  
true."

"Inquisitive man from earth, right well ye advertise from whence ye came;

Thy tongue is bravely hung, to pry and quiz for lore; I fault thee not,  
'Tis thy only chance to garner truth, this realm holds few soiled by war;

Bloodshed and murder done on earth unfits a soul for peace, or holy joy.

'Tis not gloom shadowing my soul, 'tis but worldly impress, firmly stamped,

Time nor eternity may clear a brow, clouded by religious bigotry.  
Christ's

Blood may pure the soul, the scar still blights the form; earth moulds  
The soul, heaven grants it home. My record earthy made were better left

Unhistoried. I passed through life a silent gloomy ghost, avoiding light;

I sought the shadowing, I found no joys in life, no gladness ever lumed  
My sluggish heart; my life's review is a vista of selfishness and pride,  
Proud of my austerity and self-denial, my rigid life dwarfed my soul,  
And renders me a drone in heaven. Hear aright, quote me not wrong-fully,

All sin must be denied, but to live remote from God's sunshine is murder,

Self-inflicted on better way. I spurned the beautiful on earth, joys  
God sent to cheer mankind waked not my soul from black blighting gloom.

Bigotry held my soul in deadly grip, and turned my heart from holy joy.

I founded a creed well demarked from all, in speech, in gait, in dress;  
By ignoring world, torturing flesh, we hoped to gain God's holy smile;  
At cross with every joy we dwelt, an incubus on life; our greatest, only  
Redeeming trait, honesty, love of peace; charity we professed, but not  
The earth wide charity of Christ, that covers all mankind; but narrow,  
Confined to church; those not of us held no claim; our jaundiced view  
Held our passport alone gained heaven's reward. Thus we silent passed  
Wrapped in gloomy fanaticism; all pleasure was stern forbid by church  
To love the beautiful in life was sacrilege, to cull from nature's store  
One moment of pleasing mirth, or innocent joy, sent a soul to fiery hell;  
To love the beautiful was heresy, to smile at God's glorious handiwork  
Was to estrange a soul from heaven; the rainbow's varied hue was  
hailed

As placed by God as sign of safety, not there to be admired; all things  
Pleasing and beautiful on earth were God placed to cheer mankind,  
To hold human thoughts to the better way; the sweet flowers' bloom,  
The birds' song, all nature's harmonies were tuned to cheer man's  
pilgrimage.

I in mistaken zeal taught that all was vanity, must be on earth denied,  
To appease a wrathful God. Thus through life I wandered, wilfully  
blind;

My dreams of Christian life were black; to do aught but pray and moan  
Was blasphemy; I passed life's long pilgrimage, clothed in blackest  
gloom,

Leaving no cheerful signs on my way, to better man or glorious world.  
I avoided the gladsome sunshine, always groping in the gloom; a ghost;  
In heaven's holy realm I feel the impress of a misspent life. Farewell."

"My guide, that gloomy one, beareth ear-mark well knifed and true,  
Of sluggish creed, that once infested earth, God for worldly good  
Strangled their inglorious bigotry, and rid the gladsome earth  
Of Godless fanaticism; to-day in straggling bands they congregate,  
And prate, or whining pray as spirit moveth. Have ye no antidote,  
No potent charm to wean souls Christ redeemed from earthy gloom?"

"One thought, oh mortal man, heaven nor happy earth  
Holds antidote to still thy waggish tongue. Heaven  
Gathereth her clan, as hen gathereth eggs for brood,  
From divers sources, must take them as presented;  
At yonder open gate creeds mould the redeemed saints;  
Heaven cannot remove the warp. Enough, we pass."

"That aged saint, standing anear the tree of life, hath well-nigh spent  
Four weary centuries in this realm, yet eternity is still in youth;  
On earth his name still holds repute; a plethoric creed yet yieldeth  
Obedience to his written will, temples, high spired and costly built,  
House disciples yet worshipping at his shrine; since his demise, creeds  
Have rose, flourished for brief space, then passed to oblivion's gloom.  
The world hath awakened from superstition's lethargy to reason's reign.  
Still his doctrine chains the few; whilst on earth, he a giant stood.  
With him hold speech, learn of earth, when superstition reigned  
supreme."

The saint thus quaintly introduced bore evidence of ancient date;  
To him I made instant address: "Oh saint of long sojourn in heaven,  
From what compass point on earth ye hail, I seek no present 'lightment.

I recent quit the world, brought hither for what purpose, I may not tell.

Time or eternity may unfold to me the mystery of my upward flight,  
This I implore, oh aged one, enlight me in speech, tempered to my gift,  
Of this grand home, the Christian's lasting home; or of pleasant earth,  
My home for yet unknown time; that I may journey worldwide, ladened,  
With truths, trademarked from heaven's blissful shore. Brief my stay,  
In this delightful realm, grant, oh thou immortal one, this my request."

"Mortal man from mundane sphere, laudable is thy present quest,  
And pregnant with much good; yet I fear me much, thy journey hence  
Hath been in vain; bear this in mind, no saint of long sojourn knows  
Aught of present earth, no friendly intercourse allowed 'twixt world  
And paradise; yon pearly gate that glibly swings well marks the line  
'Tween glorious world and saints' abode; late arrivals from earth  
Come charged with worldly lore; rigid laws forbid free speech,  
And chain them to indolence and rest, hence older saints gain  
No profit by their advent here. Of heaven, brief discourse covers all;  
Thy loquacious, active guide hath full description given. Y've viewed  
The life-given river flow, ye stand anear the tree, the golden streets,  
Y've tramped at will, y've heard the saintly choir sing, have listened  
To the tingling harp; this is all of heaven's show granted mortal eyes;  
If more there be, faith in dreaming John and death must slip the veil.

"Of my sojourn on earth, history hath well preserved all vital truths;  
Should I attempt to light my worldly path, I'd make sad blundering,  
And mar its outlines, from sluggish memory. Oh man, forced indolence,

Debarred mental energies, hath wrought sad havoc with brainy poise;  
Long sojourn in this realm wrecks the mind, makes all saints imbeciles.

Four weary centuries hath winged their sluggish course since I fled  
Glorious earth; four long centuries of retrogressive rest; indolence,  
And mind decay, have blurred the figuring of my distant, active past.  
Listen, long years of life I spent, with shaven poll and scowling face,  
Within frowning monastery walls, hid from the world and pleasant  
light,

Removed from man, remote from God, in touch with naught but foul  
bigotry,

And ecclesiastical fraud; for companions, gloomy degenerate men,  
hiding,

From God's sunlight, mouldering in darkness, shunning world for cause.

I in mistaken zeal, like Origen, false interpreted God's holy word,  
And with a devotion to church, true as Philonic brothers had for state,  
I labored in my darksome cell; with priests' indulgence, and penance,  
Willingly performed, I sought to bridge the yawning gulf, 'tween Christ  
And my despairing soul; studiously I conned the book, still grim doubt  
Gripped my heart, and held me wavering 'twixt hope and black despair.

"In desperation, I vowed a pilgrimage to Rome, hoping there to drink  
Deep draughts of soul-enthusing truth, from living fount, the holy pope,  
And cleanse my sinful heart by prayer, kneeling where holy Peter  
knelt,

As martyr, breathing out his blessed life to God; where grand old Paul  
In Christian exultation quit the world, and soared to earned reward.  
My labored pilgrimage to pope bore fruit I recked not of; grim horror  
Drowned my frightened soul when the foulness of the mother church  
Stood bared and naked to my shuddering view. The wickedness of  
pope

And priest would shock a devil late from hell. Rotten, corrupt, foul,  
Are weakling terms, and ill express the grimy filth of Romish see.

I journeyed Romewise true pilgrim of church, returned an infidel,  
Returned all crushed and bleeding, from injuries I little dreamed;  
I hoped indulgence from a godly pope, to purge my soul from sin;  
Homeward I fled, doubting holy church and God. Like bark rudder-  
pruned

I floated aimless and alone, wrecked by church and godless pope.

"All sins were loud forgiven by grinning pope, for stipulated price;  
The church degenerate, choked from mouldering filth, and foully sore,  
Sick with a murrain contracted from a lecherous pope; a priesthood,  
Blackened with the fumes of hell, hawking indulgence as merchandise,  
From street and public way; claiming forgiving power, they stood,  
Firm stationed 'twixt loving Christ and sinning man. Pope and priest  
Held sin's antidote, to barter for glittering gold, forgiveness granted  
For sins yet hidden in the womb of time; murderers walked the street,  
Boldly proclaiming their villainy, protected by well salaried priests;  
The very earth was soaked in sin, the atmosphere, stifling with filth;  
A pesthouse fouled with crime, black as hell, stood the holy Vatican;  
I journeyed to Rome, true pilgrim with contrite heart, fled a proselyte;  
Hope swelled my heart in pilgrimage, despair crushed my soul in flight.  
Heaven held my thoughts in journeying, hell gripped my soul on return.



"Broken-hearted, blushing with shame, profoundly sad, I quitted Rome;  
I fled, I cared not where, life held no joys for me, churchy pride  
Was humbled, gone; my monkish vows debarred me from all other  
faith;

Thus vow bound to a creed by heaven despised, I wandered, an infidel.  
In grievous bewilderment, I cast my all on Christ, in earnest prayer,  
I laid my contrite heart, all bleeding and in pain, at His holy feet.  
No intervening priest could lift the veil that dark obscured my soul;  
No pope, nor potentate of church, could cleanse my heart from doubt.  
In lowly prayer I bared my sinful life to Christ, like old Abraham,  
I wrestled with the Lord, and wrestling gained the prize; I in vision  
Saw, plain mapped to my entranced view, my future course on earth;  
Doubts vanished like mist before summer sun; I saw a church arise,  
God ordained, to purify the sinful world, saw the travail of its birth;  
I heard a benediction from heaven sent to cheer its infant growth;  
I saw the blessed Christ descend, and smile upon this weakling creed;  
I saw the old church trembling view the stripling's wondrous growth.

"I saw the glad world in glory rise from out the bogs of sin; I saw  
A panorama beautiful, plain, a vision glorious pass my view; the world  
Stood full forgiven, no priest nor pope made saint stood frowning  
Between holy Christ and man; God's loving hand reached out for all  
Who freely sought His grace. My vision sudden changed to gloom;

I saw

The old church rise in might, to crush the struggling new; I heard  
Sad groans ascend to heaven, wrung from martyrs at burning stake,  
I saw my country drenched in blood, to appease a murder-loving pope;  
I saw the mighty and the strong arrayed against the poor; and saw  
Dark prisons ope their doors, to close 'gainst pious men; I saw devils,  
Direct from hell, cheering the murdering priests to slay. Now again  
My vision changed. I saw the true faith rapid spread, brightly shine,  
Resplendent o'er the world; no cursing priest or raging pope  
Could check its glorious way. Rome was shorn of churchy might.

"In vision sent direct from Christ, my trembling soul found peace,  
My vow to Romish church was clean expunged from heaven's page.  
Through lanes and byways of the land, I sang my songs of love;  
I found the loving Christ ever stands, beckoning to sinners lost,  
To cast their every care on Him; no saint or church-paid priest  
Can pure a heart by sin made foul; 'tis loving Christ who mediates.

'Twixt God and fallen man His cleansing blood alone may wash away  
 The crimsoned blot from sinful souls. On earth the sacred cross  
 Was lifted up to save mankind; Christ's precious blood was shed,  
 That all who would might be redeemed. Thus through life I taught,  
 Earnestly, devoutly believed. When my journey was complete, I heard,  
 In exultation, the summon's voice, 'Come higher, thou hast won re-  
 ward.'"

"Most honored one"—thus to him I made address—"grant me, I pray,  
 One true reply to question asked. Pardon I crave ere ye respond.  
 Ye to my benighted soul hast mouthed fluent speech, glibly wording  
 History ill understood, nor can I from thy discourse ready glean  
 From whence ye journeyed hither. I make bold, in worldly imprudence,  
 To ask thy country, and the name ye bore, whilst laboring below."

"Mortal, thy craving grieves me not, nor blush of shame reds my cheek,  
 For footprints left on earth; no trembling for record heaven kept.  
 In fatherland, my name holds honor still; I stood in worldly life,  
 Godfather for a goodly creed, the first to break from Rome; I'm he  
 Who stood condemned to burn, at Worms' ungodly diet; grievous my  
 course

Through earthy life, heavy my cross to bear; I was hounded, hunted,  
 By assassins paid by churchy pope. I sang on street for daily bread;  
 Sustained by God, I triumphant lived my time; I saw a glorious church,  
 Christ blessed arise, and spread throughout the world; it bore a name  
 I hope endures on earth to-day; Germany, my natal land, ye ken the  
 name."

"Aye, glorious saint, right well I follow thy well-mouthed history;  
 Thy name on earth stands synonym for revolution, and reform. Many  
 Gilded spires rear high their graceful outline heavenward, to guide  
 Mankind to better life, and to commemorate thy daring past. The  
 world

Bows willing knee to Martin Luther's name. Farewell, ye honored  
 saint."

"Oh man, ungraved on earth," thus spake my guide, "to ye heaven  
 Hath indulgence granted beyond thy meed. He to whom ye spake  
 Walked earth without a peer; he stood a monument glorious  
 To Christ and saving grace; he grasped the holy plan of God,

And flung the gates of heaven wide to him who firm believed;  
He reared the crimsoned cross on high, in spite of popish rage;  
God's holy book he granted all, to learn of Christ's saving plan.  
Enough, we onward pass; ye conned his history whilst on earth.

"Here standeth one, who recent quit the earth, is now on border land,  
'Tween time and long eternity, behind him lies his worldly life,  
Now finished, as a dream; before him unfolds eternity; what's before  
He recks not of. Too recent his advent here for instructive tongue;  
With him hold converse; when adjourned, join me for further journey."

The one thus introduced stood in silent admiration of paradise,  
Listening with attentive ear to peans sung by saints redeemed.  
To him I cheerful spake: "Fair stranger, deem me not impertinent  
Thus to disturb thy inwrapt revery; know ye my time speedeth,  
E'en now the pearly gate trembles on a yielding hinge to ope,  
And grant me exit for lower world. The residue of allotted time  
I needs must well employ in garnering wisdom and tested truth,  
That on my journey worldwise I go full freighted with saintly lore.  
In interview, should I offend, grant me but scant reply, but hold  
Me guiltless of intended wrong. Brief my questioning, answering  
May devour time. If burdensome my quest, oh late redeemed, pass  
them

As idle vapping, from one who knows not heaven's way. I would  
know,

Does paradise, this heaven, receipt thy earthy toil? Is payment full?  
Does forecast of eternity present a bright and cloudless view?"

"Pilgrim, ye offer no offence; 'twould glad my soul to render thee  
Full answer to thy prayer. Of things eternal I'm not posted well.  
Know ye not, I but recent quit the world, my welcoming chant  
Rang through heaven's corridors, when swung the golden gate ajar  
To pass thy ungraved body through. Unfilled as yet my cup of joy,  
Heaven stands to me as country unexplored, eternity is all before;  
The future will unfold to me the Christian's home and joys; I wait,  
In faith, and hail with gladsome heart my endless home in heaven.  
Through struggles manifold I gained this paradise, I pause, I rest;  
Of heaven and eternity I waive dialogue, ignorance must chain  
My willing tongue at halt. There comes a time when I might speak,  
And hold discourse intelligent, of the Christian's beautiful home.

"To ye I might enlightening speak of earth, thy home for unknown time.

For centuries medieval darkness hath ruled the world, and surely kept God's brightest jewels deep in gloom; superstition and ignorance ruled; Christ, the holy essence of love, hath never stood to earth full revealed; Church and canting priest hath ever stood 'twixt man and holy Christ. I speak in no ambiguous lore when I proclaim an intellectual dawn; Blusheth the worldly horizon; night hath worn its dark and weary way,

Through interminable time, since Christ's advent at lowly Bethlehem. But now the glow of rising sun wakes the gladsome world, and drives Superstition's gloomy clouds, rifted and torn, back to oblivion's womb, From whence they came. The day the great Christ lighted, glorious day,

Hath dawned, to cheer a waiting world. Man hath broke the chains, is free.

"The world to-day stands with tearless eyes, viewing repulsive death, No friendly hands compound reviving balm; religion is surely doomed. Progressive man views unconcerned the shrinking, struggling corpse. Few with manifest hypocrisy attempt to hold in check lethal sleep, And for yet a time hold at pause the God-ordained decree. Priests, Theological tramps, ycleped evangelists, itinerate the waking world, Intoxicated by the exuberance of their own egotism; they preach, And by proxy sing, of churchy triumph yet to come. 'Tis all in vain Their rant and howl; man-made religion is doomed, its requiem sounds From every clime; the awakening world holds broader views; too late They preach, 'tis but revivifying slumber, a short refreshing rest; The awakening will be glorious as the the rising of the holy Christ.

"Mark well my heaven-spoken prophecy, the wakening will never come As foretold by stragglng mendicants; no ism nor man-made creed will Emerge from lasting sleep, or rise to trouble earth again; soon man Will spurn the churchy tramp, as cumbrance to the glorious world; Reason will hold full sway, the expanding, progressive mind of men Will grasp Christ's simple plan of grace, and live as God designed. Religion of the world hath outlived its day, 'tis senile, bent and old, Like a garment well worn, must be cast aside. Faith, the great anchor, Of well-grounded hope, is dead, its death knell echoes o'er every land; The church dwells deserted and alone; the wondrous energies of man Exalt the world, loud proclaim, in no uncertain voice, intellect Must reign, and wrest the earth from superstition's fateful grasp.

Who may limit the glory of the future, when Christ is full understood?  
Earth holdeth no language to express the glory of that reign. Priests  
And canting evangelists will flee, like beaten curs, from human sight.

"Religion of the day is held in cohesion by allegories and delusions;  
'Tis a religion of black fetichisms dark as heathen Afric holds;  
The only God worshipped is gold, not cast as calf or grinning ape,  
But coined in country's name. Elder, priest and pope bow cringing  
knee

To wealth and worldly fame; churches are turned to dens of mirth,  
With pastor as grinning clown, games of chance are shameless played;  
Maidens, encouraged by dying church, will sell their charms for pelf;  
Condemning sin, where wealth abounds, is unpopular with the guild;  
Priests covet the wealth that sinners hold, to aggrandize the church;  
All bow a servile knee for mammon's smiles; and fondle ill-gotten gain.  
Church windows are stained with paintings bright, to inflict posterity  
With memories that would blush hell if painted o'er its portals black.  
God's pure sunlight is filtered through gaudy glass, placed as sacred  
To the memory of some robber, whose record would dim Satan's fame.

"Of holy faith, and saving grace, all churches stand in delinquency;  
There is manifest inertia in church and communicant; priestly prestige  
Hath fled the world, reason's hurled superstition from its foul throne,  
And waked the world from apathy, and churchy rule; pernicious doc-  
trine,

Taught by creeds, hath wrought sad havoc with Christ's church on  
earth,

Hath strangled faith, shackled hope, and rendered inert God's holy  
plan.

Evangelists in quest of gold, not souls, infest the earth, kill Christ,  
And carnalize His church; they stand to-day before God's judgment bar,  
As guilty deicides, as were the Jews of old. They eloquent disseminate  
Medieval ignorance, they prate and howl, distorting truth, and fouling  
Christ's plan of grace, rendering religion a stench. The book of God  
Is misconstrued, contorted, to suit creeds, doubtful plans are worked  
To capture converts, silly songs are sung, disgraceful language used,  
'That insult cultured minds, and people earth with scoffing infidels.

"Insidiously injected into each discourse is a begging plea for gold;  
Sniveling preachers cry as Lazarus in the church, but pose as Dives  
In the social whirl; church to-day of Christ's love is pauperized;

The tramp divine would sell his birthright, not for porridge nourishing,  
But for pelf; the souls of men are ranked as worth accounts recorded  
On some banker's plethoric book; saint and sinner are anathematized,  
In language too foul for hell, learned by priest in gambling den;  
Sweet-faced maidens, pure as Christ or angels are, are foul traduced,  
And shameless branded as she devils; mothers gray with age and care  
Are with harlots ranked, made to blush with shame, in God's own  
house;

Old men, whose record would put to shame these canting gospel clowns,  
Are branded hypocrites, their godly lives, foul besmirched, by grinning,  
Gibbering apes, spewed from the griping bowels of hell as filth.

"Ye ask, if religion be sunk so low, how gained I this blissful goal?  
I followed well Christ's simple plan; I had scant company; I saw  
The cross, that blood-stained emblem from Calvary's hill, reared high  
In hope of gain; I heard the blessed name of Christ traduced, fouled,  
By maudlin imbeciles, claiming inspiration from God, to teach the  
world,

Begging frauds, unknown to Holy Ghost, claiming unction from holy  
Christ

To peddle their vile repulsive cant. The pure religion left by Christ  
Is maimed, is foully scarred by human innovation. That command to  
love

Thy neighbor as thyself is pruned from churchy record-book, usurped  
By sordid greed. If the blessed Christ should visit earth this day,  
All plumed in heavenly guise, churches would brand Him crazy crank,  
Drive Him hence, as one bereft of mind, and reeking with heresy.  
Aye, religion by churches taught is by Christ condemned to pass;  
The grip of creeds are loosed, senile decay hath relaxed their hold;  
No priest nor pope may stay the fate foreordained by God and Christ.

"Churches by their selfish rule have turned awry God's saving plan;  
Hell created by minds diseased is preached to frighten imbeciles;  
The pure religion by the Nazarine taught is foul debased, is made,  
A byword by churchy greed; made uninviting by strolling evangelists,  
Foul-mouthed tramps, dug up from God knows where, they aspire to  
lead,

Pompously pose as holy men, as Moses rehumanized, to guide mankind.  
God's word is wrong construed, to suit fanatic creeds, known truths  
Are twisted, precepts warped, and the holy loving Christ crucified  
In agonies greater than the priests of old inflicted on Calvary;

Bear this my discourse well in mind when to earth ye homeward pass,  
Analyze and reflect, study Christ's simple plan of saving grace; withal,  
Hold Christ guiltless of present anarchy. Live pure, waste no thought  
On faulty churchy creeds; leave endless eternity to God, ye strive  
To solve the problem of earthy life. Now, oh man, a long farewell."

I thus addressed my guide: "Oh holy saint, ye home strange guests  
In this bejeweled retreat, it seemeth to one yet chained to earth;  
Many here have gained reward by ways not taught by tonguey priest;  
Most saints, I vow, have voiced strange views of earthy creeds; e'en ye,  
Saintly guide, assigned by holy Peter, guardian of the gate, doth prate  
In verbiage not charged with flattery; have saints grown weary, have  
Indolence and idle rest, of which ye all do groan, surfeited redeemed,  
And bred contempt for heaven, and its wondrous show? Give ye answer,  
Oh thou pilot wise; defend thy realm from glib and stinging tongue."

"Ha! thou cunning knave, hath thy fertile brain hatched further quiz?  
Have ye found other flaw in heaven? Thy memory hath fled thy brain,  
Thy mental poise seems tottery, thy faculties overworked; ye may  
Journey worldwise light ladened, if memory serves thee thus scurvily.  
No thoughts are birthed in paradise, they all bear earthy mould;  
Saints prate of earth, voicing views brought from world; the grave  
Robbed all of wisdom worldly gained; heaven fills no empty void  
With wisdom, or with thought. Enough, we pass to other babbling  
guests.

"Meet thee one, who hath homed in heaven near two thousand years;  
He stood full grown, and wise in age, ere Christian time had dawn;  
At advent here, he bore age beyond the 'lotted span on earth; well  
Had he borne the burden of life, bright shines his record in heaven.  
So ancient his flight from earth, that he passed the entrance gate  
Swathed in the cerecloth of Egypt's tombs. Wise he waxed, far beyond  
His day on earth; with prophetic eye he searched the womb of time,  
Mapped well coming events hidden from mortal ken; schooled by seers,  
And sustained by faith, he proclaimed the coming of the Christ;  
He saw the guiding star arise, with joy he hailed its glow as guide,  
To Mary's lowly bed; with no reluctant feet swiftly sped to worship  
The earth-born God. Well is he versed in chronography, right well  
His memory stands depressing indolence. His themes of ancient lore  
Bear date far back in Egypt's history. With him hold converse, lend

Listening ear, burden memory with wisdom culled from his discourse.  
When wearied, join me on river's brink; I go to meditate and rest."

With reverential awe I bowed me low before this ancient guest;  
A trembling fear fell upon me; behold, I silent stood, and dumb,  
My palsied tongue refused to utter sound, my limbs did quake,  
As one by ague seized. Before me stood one who walked the earth  
Ere yet its bounds were mapped; one whose age antedated Christ,  
One who moved on earth ere Christian time figured calendar.  
Before my entranced mental view there passed a panorama grand;  
I saw the frowning Sphinx moulded and chisel cut by Pharaoh's slaves;  
I saw a toiling captive band rear high the giant pyramids; I saw  
God's chosen people laborious tread the yielding clay, and shape  
Egypt's yellow brick; I heard the voice of toiling Jews calling God  
For needed rest; I saw the infant Moses, swathed and cradled, float  
Adown the sluggish river's tide; I heard the Egyptian princess call  
His rescue from the flood; I saw the burning bush, heard Jehovah's  
Mighty voice proclaim His wishes and commands. As a vivid dream,  
I saw the captives doubting march, cloud-guided from Egypt's shore;  
I saw the Red Sea's turbid flood roll back to give them passage way;  
I saw proud Pharaoh's serried ranks engulfed and drowning in the  
deep.

I stood as one bereft of wit, lost in the mazes of the distant past;  
By human will, yet full retained, I broke the entrancing dreamy spell;  
With shaking voice I halting spake: "Revered and ancient guest of  
heaven,

Thy pardon grant, should I in hasty speech offend or least annoy,  
Or from human weakness o'erstep the boundaries fixed by saintly rule;  
My conscience stands void of all offence to thee or heaven; old age  
Will ever hold me chained to reverence; I hold much speech ill-timed  
From one who in the realm holds no title. This I fain would know,  
Did my saintly guide proclaim full truth when he affirmed that ye,  
With living eyes, beheld that brilliant star guiding to Mary's bed?"

"Aye, thy guide well lettered truth; I saw that guiding star arise,  
That glorious star of Bethlehem; I saw its silver raylets shoot,  
Athwart Judea's eastmost sky; swiftly I followed its glowing trail;  
Leading where the new-born Saviour laid; I heard the sweet-toned  
Angel band chanting from on high, 'Peace on earth, goodwill to man';  
With no unwilling feet I flew, to reach that blessed mother's cot;  
I saw the blushing mother stand, trembling near that Christly bed;



That glowing star shone low in heaven, stood fixed anear the stall  
In which reposed the world's redeeming Lord. In silent awe I stood,  
Anear the holy babe, and with prophet vision saw the great world  
Bow low before that cooing child, and worship that earth-born God.

"Aye, I saw the Christ in infancy, ever kept Him well in view, trailed  
His wandering footsteps whilst on earth, believed His saving truth;  
I stood anear that fateful night, in Gethsemane I heard that prayer  
Ascend on high, that holds the world to-day, firm linked to heaven.  
I saw traitorous lips implant that kiss that shackled grim death,  
And robbed the grave of victory; I saw that toilsome journey made,  
Up Calvary's rock-ribbed side; I looked with awe upon the cross, borne  
By the suffering Son of God; I heard the murderous Jews loud shout  
Their victory over John, and Christ; I heard the cruel hammer's stroke  
That nailed him to the tree; I saw that vicious shaft raised high,  
With holy Jesus firm impaled; I saw His precious blood escape, dye  
The cross wood, crimsoned red; I saw the glittering Roman spear  
Deep plunged into His quivering side, not in wanton cruelty or hate,  
But to brief a lingering death; a Roman soldier, warm of heart,  
In sympathy hurled the lance. I saw the weeping Mary, heartbroken,  
Kneel, and bare her bleeding heart to God; I saw the glorious sun,  
High in heaven, enshrouded as in midnight gloom; the sorrowing earth  
Shook and trembled, as a bark on wind-tossed sea. Solomon's great  
temple,

The pride of Jewish priests, swayed and shivered, from foundation  
To lofty dome. All nature heard Christ's dying groan, and shuddered.  
Aye, I knew the Christ, from birth to death on Calvary; with faith  
I looked for His return; I knew no gravevault hewed by man might  
hold

For long entombed the Son of God. Well founded faith, He conquered  
Death, and rose triumphant from the grave. Enough, ye know results."

"Tis true, oh glorious saint, Christ's cross stands emblem for truth;  
Yet there be those, still burdening earth, that hold in doubt His  
Origin from holy God. Of this we waive discussion; I fain would hear  
Thy well charged lips voicing lore of ancient time, antedating Mary's  
Mysterious shadowing. Oh thou relic of misty past, ye, and ye alone,  
May read aright the riddle of Egypt's distant birth; enlightenment give,  
That I may take homeward journey, full cargoed with ancient history,  
Culled from one who walked the earth when time was in its infancy.  
Impart to me, oh thou immortal one, the mysteries of thy natal land;

Unshroud for me the silent Sphinx, who planned the giant pyramids,  
That rear their stately outlines high on Egypt's grassless plain;  
Whose bones lie mouldering 'neath their ponderous weight? What king  
E'er reigned on God's fair earth merited a tomb so wondrous grand?  
Speak, oh saint, enlight the world of Egypt's distant, glorious past."

"Vain the attempt, were I inclined, to lucidate Egypt's history. Ye  
know,

In this heaven founded by John, all histories, save of worldly faith,  
Are counted as dross, not suited to burden saintly minds. 'Tis ruled  
That here all minds shall stand at rest, all energies call a halt.  
All aspirations by law forbid; there is a course mapped out for all;  
Beyond its limits, well defined, saints must allow no thoughts to stray;  
Hence, no stimuli for memory found, past earthy events are soon  
forgot;

Past histories are yet faint pictured on the brain, but long repose  
Hath blurred outlines, and inhibited reproduction, indolent inactivity,  
Hath atrophied the brain, and curtailed memory; no saint can discourse  
On distant history; hence ye will hold me exonerated from discourtesy.

"Ye have on earth histories well penned, and filled with rich reward  
For he who scans their pregnant pages; they well illumine the past,  
Chronicle all knowledge worthy of transmission; ponder well the lines,  
Seek to unravel tradition and mythology by natural laws; no mystery  
Enshrouds the distant past; God's handiwork is well displayed; nature  
Chambers no deceit; all happenings spring from natural cause; deceit  
And superstition come from man, not from God. This my parting  
advice,

Bear well in mind, when ye to earth return, seek holy truth and light,  
Be patient, search, ye'll find no flowery beds of ease; knowledge gained  
Requires toil and long research, not idle rest and ignorant indolence.  
Nature is exacting, requiring full effort from her slaves; grand truths  
Come not to man or saint unsought; to saints homing in John's heaven  
No glorious visions ever come; this Paradise homes full finished minds.  
No further search allowed, or craved, by indolent, resting, rusting  
saints;

Here equal stands the unlettered hind and the patient, learned savant."

"Once more, oh revered one, I indulgence crave for further trespass;  
My saddened heart must solace seek; with shuddering soul I approach  
The theme that burdens my worldly heart; if ye can solace give, send

Me earthwise with gladsome soul; my supple knee shall daily bend  
In holy reverence to thee as patron saint; on earth's fair breast I'll  
Rear a stately shaft, polished and high, to canonize thy name; hear me,  
And let thy gentle heart hold ready sympathy for my great distress."

"Peace, man; know ye not heaven holds no sympathy for human woes?

Here

The heart is void of all earth holds sacred; the fountains are dry,  
Made so by church decree. Your human heart may bleed for others'  
woes,

But saintly hearts are cold, they hold no sympathy; of this beware,  
Bow no cringing knee to one who walked the earth, save holy Christ,  
To Him ye owe thy fealty, He alone can mediate with God. Speak, man,  
Lay bare thy human heart; thy grief I may not share, yet may relieve."

"I stand reproved, and pardon ask for trenching on forbidden grounds;  
Hear me to end; if again I pass, in worldly eagerness, beyond lines  
Fixed by heaven's decree, call me to halt, and bid our converse end;  
Years ago, one fled the earth, who held my life at her caprice,  
All virtues allowed by God on earth, found lodgment in her soul,  
All graces bestowed from nature's store endowed her beauteous form;  
She stood a model perfect of God's handiwork; her faultless outline  
Put chiseled art to shame; waving locks, black as nimbus clouds,  
Encircled her classic brow; her eyes like great diamonds, faultless cut,  
Shone with heaven's reflected light; her brief sojourn on yonder earth  
Enriched mankind, and left a memory embalmed in holy love; with her  
My stormy life was dead; I stood enwrapped in perfect love; our love  
Encompassed all our lives, was blended, perfect, pure; I stood at peace  
With all the world; I worshipped no God but love, yielded no fealty  
But to her graceful form, sought no heaven, where she was not, nor  
Held a hope beyond her smile. Thus glided my life, till cruel death,  
That monster that intrudes on human bliss, despoiled me of every joy;  
In heaven I find her not, in vain my search, I no pleasing tidings  
Glean of her sojourn among the blessed. Anguish holds my soul in  
grip

And giant fear trembles my human heart, lest her pure life ripened  
On earth for nameless torture after death. Could a just loving God  
Condemn so pure a soul to hell? Speak, oh saint, and still my heart."

"Be comforted, oh man of earth; well blended love is not estranged;  
The one ye seek is not in hell. Listen, give attentive ear, believe,

No soul that ever came from God finds lodgment in a burning hell.  
Some place, somewhere, there lies a land, not visioned by aged John,  
Of perfect human bliss, where souls made perfect dwell in peace,  
Where man holds fellowship with man, where human passions, purified,  
Still sway the yielding heart, where energies of men still reign,  
And blend finite, with infinite. Where this blissful land may lay  
Is beyond the ken of saint or man. When back to world ye find way,  
Live so that when despoiling death calls thy trembling body down  
To dust and grewsome worms, thy soul with trifling pause may soar  
To realms where dwells thy earthy love. Now, oh mortal, fare ye well."

"With full many queries have I vexed thy suffering ears, oh pleasant  
And instructive guide, for which I thy pardon humbly crave; ye must  
Hold me guiltless of premeditative offence. If my rebellious tongue  
Hath erstwhile gone astray, and wandered o'er lines forbid, 'twas but  
Linguistic slip, not uttered to offend or bend or wilful break rules  
Long observed by heaven's redeemed guests. As stranger, unwilling  
flung

Into realms unknown, I sought but pleasing entertainment; right well  
Hath Paradise entertained and yielded joys far beyond my earthy meed;  
Proven truths have burdened memory; now when called in homing  
flight,

I go full freighted, laden with history faultless gleaned from they  
Who quit the world, redeemed from lasting death. My sojourn above  
Is well nigh o'er, I hear the call from distant earth, faint but clear,  
Calling my return; soon must I depart this restful realm, go claim  
My burden shed on quitting earth. That star that brightly gleamed  
As beacon light, to guide my way from glorious earth to this retreat,  
Hath worldwise rose, vouching to me safe return. Oh thou patient one,  
Pleasant hath been our wandering, most I've gleaned I owe to thee;  
If heaven should claim my soul, when death hath clipped the thread,  
And again I wing an upward flight, freed from earthy mould, eternity  
Will have lost its chilling awe, my soul will speed from earth to thee;  
Thy great white soul will magnet be to draw my escaping soul on high;  
Thy jeweled crown will light the way, from tomb to heavenly rest.  
Pardon my long and weary prelude, to question yet unvoiced. To this,  
A cherished dream long unborn, I now give voice, praying full reply;  
Whilst burdened with life on yonder globe, ere thy call to eternity,  
What country yielded ye home, what name by admiring mortals  
known?"

"Man, thy tongue sheds flattery, glib as clanking bells shed tone;  
Withal I grant ye honest aim. Your flattering speech would gain  
Large prestige at earthy court, but here it falls on sodden ears,  
And reddens not the blushless cheek, nor draws reply more readily.  
Your quest of history I earthly made calls for scant discourse;  
Brief are the pages earned by me in the great tomes earthy penned;  
Yet I hold no cause to blush with shame for part of record earthy made.  
To England's crown I owed fealty, yet much I fear my history left  
Dims patriotism, and smirches my name with treason's blot; right well  
I wielded murderous sword to unthroned a tyrant king; dark ignorance  
My heritage, mingling with clowns my social lot; my youthful mind  
Slept undeveloped by bookish lore; dastard sin clutched my soul,  
Warped my better life; foul blasphemy ruled my tongue and ready lip,  
Voicing profanity and sinister cursing Almighty God. 'Twas thus  
To manhood's poise I faulty grew; well was I known throughout the  
land

As the wicked tinker of Elston; right well I fit the foul cognomen;  
Fear grasped my sinful soul, and frightful insanity contorted my brain;  
Devils haunted my sleep; in waking hours I smelled the stench of hell;  
Fantastic visions troubled mind, superstition drove me wild; I heard  
The august voice of God commanding me to hell; I saw legions of devils  
Beckoning me to perdition's horrid vaults; in imagination diseased  
I saw the frowning front of Christ, banishing me from Christian hope;  
In black despair, I worshipped trees, lowing bulls, and held that Turk  
Stood nearer heaven's gate than he who worshipped Christ or holy God;  
In grim desolation I prayed to Christ, for light, or gloomy dismal  
death;

Within a dungeon's darksome wall Christ rent the veil, and offered  
light.

Ye know the rest; if patience holds ye well in leash, 'tis poorly penned,  
And couched in language culled from clowns. My scribbled tomes com-  
piled,

Were conceived in ignorance, nurtured by superstition, and faulty  
traced,

By a distempered mind; I inflicted posterity with allegories fantastic  
In imagery, and wild in elaboration; ye have scanned the book and  
know

Its worth to worldly man. Did Bunyan live in vain, let world be  
judge."

"Thanks, oh gentle guide, my failing ear but faintly hears thy voice,  
My pleasing journey's near complete. To ye, ever to be remembered  
one,

I owe the pleasure of my stay; vain the soft-mouthed thanks I voice,  
They but faintly mirror the gratitude I feel. Longer my soul would  
tarry,

I hear the call from glorious earth, bidding me return, I must obey."

Sweet is the harmony that softly rings  
Through heaven's aisles when the choir sings;  
Soft is the light o'er Paradise shone,  
Brighter than sun from Jehovah's throne.

Sweet is the murmur of the flowing stream,  
Clear as an echo, enchanting as a dream;  
Green is the foliage on that wondrous tree  
That blooms and fruits in eternity.

Bright are the stars that brilliant gleam  
On the glittering crowns of saints redeemed,  
Restful the home to redeemed souls given,  
In this golden realm, this blissful heaven.

Heaven's wondrous lights are paling on my eye, the grand harmony  
From angels' harps sound distant to my ear, the peans sung by saints  
Sound as echoes from far off land, the murmur of the river stilled,  
The tree of life gone, is fled; darkness grim, black and horrible  
Encompasses me about; farewell, ye immortal guests of heaven, fare-  
well,

Oh realms of joy and rest; farewell, thou flowing stream whose flood  
Heals all nations' woes; farewell oh tree of life, a long farewell, I  
Must leave this restful home, the glorious lawless west beckons me,  
With alluring smiles, that none may know, who loves not freedom's  
wilds.

'Tis finished, all light hath flown; I stand enshrouded in murky gloom,  
Silent and oppressive as the hand of death. Is this dissolution's touch,  
Loathsome, grim and terrible? Does dark oblivion, lasting and eternal,  
Shadow my trembling soul, and estrange me from heaven and happy  
earth?

No friendly hand to guide me now, no light to steer my downward  
flight;

Silence appalling holds me in fateful grip, holds my heart at pause;  
Nay, nay, it is not death, 'tis but transition earthwise from heaven;  
My glorious pilot from distant world vouched safe return; I fear not.  
Hark, what distant sound greets mine ear, in cadence earthy familiar?  
So harsh a note ne'er startled heaven; 'tis from old world, greeting me;  
Full well I know its savage ring, 'tis mouthed by giant wolf. Yon light,  
Faintish and pale, holds earthy gleam; mountain breezes fan my brow;  
The grand old sun paints red the east; 'tis daylight upon the plains!

Here may I leave this haven of eternal rest;  
The endless stretch of eternity lies before;  
Here let them rest, thus they builded their home,  
Here must they forever dwell. So mote it be. Amen.  
Charge me not with criticism on Christian life,  
I but paint as ye have planned ye sowed on earth,  
In heaven as ye builded it, reap thy reward.  
Rejoice, oh saints, thy faith was not in vain.



THE END.















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